

The Power of a
PRAYING[®]
Wife

**STORMIE
OMARTIAN**



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All the stories related in this book are true, but most of the names have been changed to protect the privacy of the people mentioned.

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THE POWER OF A PRAYING® WIFE

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*This book is dedicated with love to my husband,
Michael, who has consistently given me more
than I ever wanted to pray about. You and I both
know that prayer works.*

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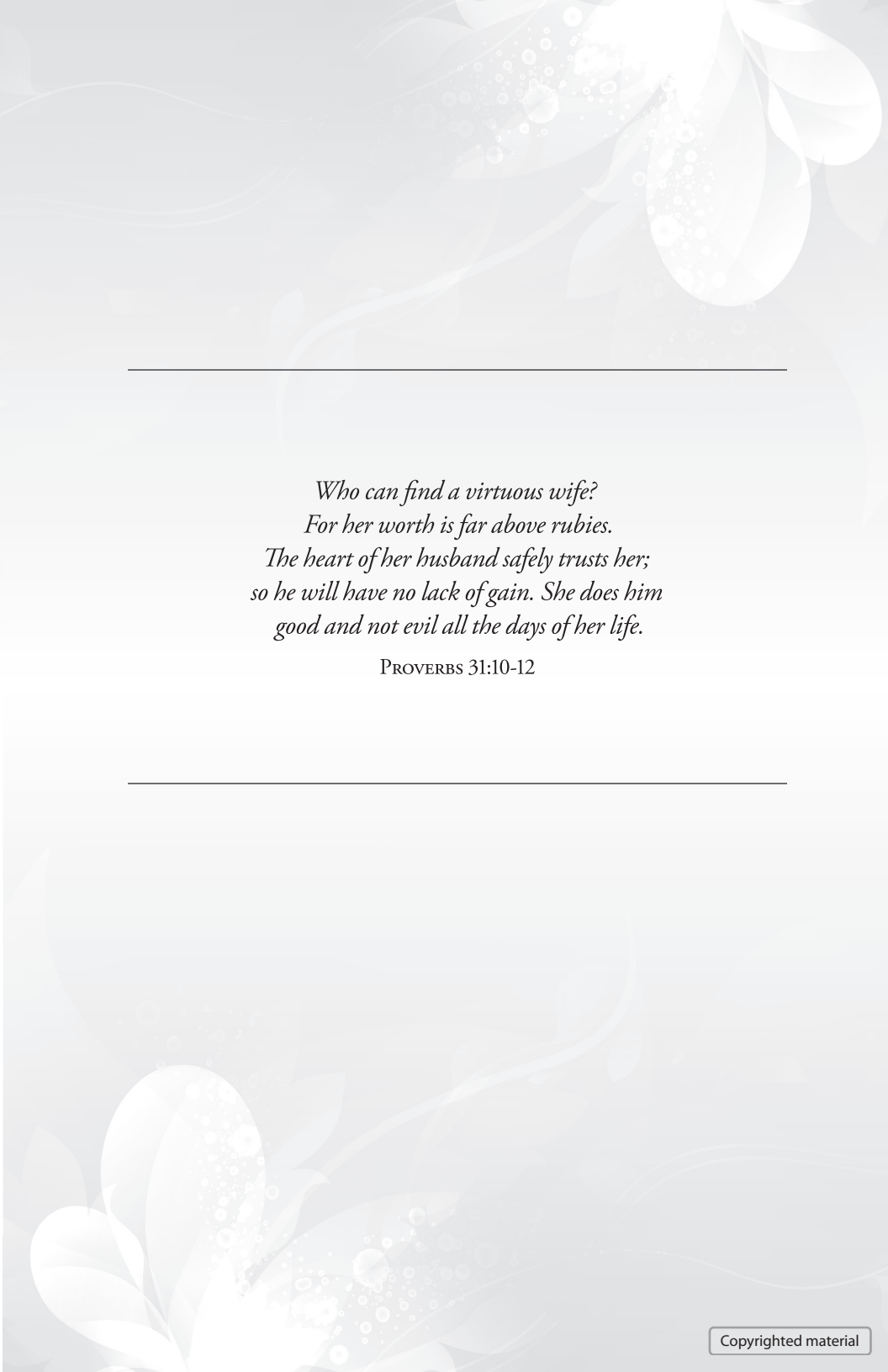


Foreword

There is a joke in our household when I refer to the number of years Stormie and I have been married. I always say, “It’s been forty wonderful years for me and forty miserable years for her.” After forty years of marriage to Stormie, there aren’t any phases of my complex personality left for her to discover. She has seen me triumph, fail, struggle, be fearful and depressed, and doubt my competency as a husband, father, and musician. She has seen me angry at God because He wouldn’t jump when I asked Him to. She has witnessed miracles, as God redeemed something from the ashes to gold. Every step of the way has been accompanied by her prayers, and this book was written from her experience over the years. I cannot imagine what my life would be without her praying for me. It gives me comfort and security, and also fulfills the mission the Lord has for us to pray for each other and bear one another’s burdens. I can think of no better way to truly love your husband than by lifting him up in prayer on a consistent basis. It is a priceless gift that helps him experience God’s blessings and grace.

Stormie, I love you.

Your covered-in-prayer husband,
Michael



*Who can find a virtuous wife?
For her worth is far above rubies.
The heart of her husband safely trusts her;
so he will have no lack of gain. She does him
good and not evil all the days of her life.*

PROVERBS 31:10-12

His Wife

The hard part about being a praying wife, other than the sacrifice of time, is maintaining a pure heart. It must be clean before God in order for you to see good results. That's why praying for a husband must begin with praying for his wife. If you have resentment, anger, unforgiveness, or an ungodly attitude—even if there's good reason for it—you'll have a difficult time seeing answers to your prayers. But if you can release those feelings to God in total honesty and then move into prayer, there is nothing that can change a marriage more dramatically. Sometimes wives sabotage their own prayers because they don't pray them from a right heart. It took me awhile to figure that out.

My Favorite Three-Word Prayer

I wish I could say that I've been regularly praying for my husband from the beginning of our marriage until now. I haven't. At least not like I'm suggesting in this book. Oh, I prayed. The prayers were short: "Protect him, Lord." They were to the point: "Save our marriage." But most commonly they were my favorite three-word prayer: "Change him, Lord."

When we were first married, I was a new believer coming out of a life of great bondage and error and had much to learn about the delivering and restoring power of God. I thought I had married a man who was close to perfect, and what wasn't perfect was cute. As

time went on, cute became irritating and perfect became driving perfectionism. I decided that what irritated me most about him had to be changed and then everything would be fine.

It took a number of years for me to realize my husband was never going to conform to my image. It took a few years beyond that to understand I couldn't make him change in *any* way. In fact, it wasn't until I started going to God with what bothered me that I began to see any difference at all. And then it didn't happen the way I thought it would. *I* was the one God worked on first. *I* was the one who began to change. *My* heart had to be softened, humbled, pummeled, molded, and reconstructed before He even started working on my husband. *I* had to learn to see things according to the way God saw them—not how I thought they should be.

Gradually I realized it's impossible to truly give yourself in prayer for your husband without first examining your own heart. I couldn't go to God and expect answers to prayer if I harbored unforgiveness, bitterness, or resentment. I couldn't pray *my* favorite three-word prayer without knowing in the deepest recesses of my soul that I had to first pray *God's* favorite three-word prayer: "Change *me*, Lord."

Who, Me?...Change?

Don't say I didn't warn you. When you pray for your husband, especially in the hopes of changing him, you can surely expect some changes. But the first changes won't be in *him*. They'll be in *you*. If this makes you as mad as it made me, you'll say, "Wait a minute! I'm not the one that needs changing here!" But God sees things we don't. He knows where we have room for improvement. He doesn't have to search long to uncover attitudes and habits that are outside His perfect will for us. He requires us to not sin in our hearts because sin separates us from Him and we don't get our prayers answered. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Psalm 66:18). God wants our hearts to be right so the answers to our prayers are not compromised.

This whole requirement is especially hard when you feel your

husband has sinned against you with unkindness, lack of respect, indifference, irresponsibility, infidelity, abandonment, cruelty, or abuse. But God considers the sins of unforgiveness, anger, hatred, self-pity, lovelessness, and revenge to be just as bad as any others. Confess them and ask God to set you free from anything that is not of Him. One of the greatest gifts you can give your husband is your own wholeness. The most effective tool in transforming him may be your own transformation.

Don't worry, I struggled with all this, too. In fact, every time my husband and I came to an impasse, God and I had a conversation that went something like this:

“Do You see the way he is, Lord?”

“Do you see the way *you* are?”

“Lord, are You saying there are things You want to change in me?”

“Many things. Are you ready to hear them?”

“Well, I guess so.”

“Tell Me when you're really ready.”

“Why me, God? *He's* the one that needs to change.”

“The point is not who *needs* to change. The point is who is *willing* to change.”

“But God, this isn't fair.”

“I never said life is fair. I said *I* am fair.”

“But I...”

“Someone has to be willing to start.”

“But...”

“How important is preserving your marriage?”

“Very important. The other options are unacceptable.”

“I rest My case. Let's get on with changing you.”

“Help me to have a good attitude about this, Lord.”

“That's up to you.”

“Do I have to pray for my husband even if he's not praying for me?”

“Precisely.”

“But that’s not...okay, okay, I remember. Life’s not fair. *You’re fair!*”

(Silent nodding from heaven)

“I give up. Go ahead. Oh, this is going to be painful! Cha...change...I can’t believe I’m saying this.” (Deep breath) “Change me, Lord.”

Painful? Yes! Dying to yourself is always painful. Especially when you are convinced that the other person needs more changing than you. But this kind of pain leads to *life*. The other alternative is just as painful and its ultimate end is the death of a dream, a relationship, a marriage, and a family.

God can resurrect the deadest of marriages, but it takes humbling ourselves before Him and desiring to live His way—with forgiveness, kindness, and love. *It means letting go of the past and all hurt associated with it and being willing to lose the argument in order to win the battle.* I’m not saying you have to become a person void of personality, feelings, or thoughts of your own, or be the whipping post for a husband’s whim. God doesn’t require that of you. (In fact, if you are in any kind of physical or emotional danger, remove yourself immediately from the situation to a place of safety and get help. You can pray from there while your husband receives the counseling he needs.) Submission is something you give from your heart, not something demanded of you. Jesus said, “He who loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matthew 10:39). But laying down your life is something you willingly do, *not* something that is forcefully taken from you. What I’m saying is that your attitude must be, “Whatever You want, Lord. Show me and I’ll do it.” It means being willing to die to yourself and say, “Change *me*, Lord.”

The Ultimate Love Language

Something amazing happens to our hearts when we pray for another person. The hardness melts. We become able to get beyond

the hurts, and forgive. We even end up loving the person we are praying for. It's miraculous! It happens because when we pray we enter into the presence of God and He fills us with His Spirit of love. When you pray for your husband, the love of God will grow in your heart for him. Not only that, you'll find love growing in *his* heart for *you*, without him even knowing you are praying. That's because prayer is the ultimate love language. It communicates in ways we can't. I've seen women with no feelings of love for their husbands find that as they prayed, over time, those feelings came. Sometimes they felt differently even after the first heartfelt prayer.

Talking to God about your husband is an act of love. Prayer gives rise to love, love begets more prayer, which in turn gives rise to more love. Even if your praying is not born out of completely selfless motives, your motives will become more unselfish as prayer continues. You'll find yourself more loving in your responses. You'll notice that issues which formerly caused strife between you will no longer do that. You'll be able to come to mutual agreements without a fight. This unity is vital.

When we are not united, everything falls apart. Jesus said, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand" (Matthew 12:25). Prayer brings unity even if you aren't praying together. I've seen great tension relieved between my husband and me simply by praying for him. Also, asking him, "How can I pray for you?" brings an aspect of love and care into the situation. My husband will usually stop and answer that question in great detail when he might otherwise not say anything. I know of even nonbelieving husbands who respond positively to that question from their wives.

The point in all this is that as husband and wife we don't want to be taking separate roads. We want to be on the same path together. We want to be deeply compatible, lifelong companions, and have the love that lasts a lifetime. Prayer, as the ultimate love language, can make that happen.

I Don't Even Like Him—How Can I Pray for Him?

Have you ever been so mad at your husband that the last thing you wanted to do was pray for him? So have I. It's hard to pray for someone when you're angry or he's hurt you. But that's exactly what God wants us to do. If He asks us to pray for our *enemies*, how much more should we be praying for the person with whom we have become one and are supposed to love? But how do we get past the unforgiveness and critical attitude?

The first thing to do is be completely honest with God. In order to break down the walls in our hearts and smash the barriers that stop communication, we have to be totally up-front with the Lord about our feelings. We don't have to "pretty it up" for Him. He already knows the truth. He just wants to see if we're willing to admit it and confess it as disobedience to His ways. If so, He then has a heart with which He can work.

If you are angry at your husband, tell God. Don't let it become a cancer that grows with each passing day. Don't say, "I'm going to live my life and let him live his." There's a price to pay when we act entirely independently of one another. "Neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11).

Instead say, "Lord, nothing in me wants to pray for this man. I confess my anger, hurt, unforgiveness, disappointment, resentment, and hardness of heart toward him. Forgive me and create in me a clean heart and right spirit before You. Give me a new, positive, joyful, loving, forgiving attitude toward him. Where he has erred, reveal it to him and convict his heart about it. Lead him through the paths of repentance and deliverance. Help me not to hold myself apart from him emotionally, mentally, or physically because of unforgiveness. Where either of us needs to ask forgiveness of the other, help us to do so. If there is something I'm not seeing that is adding to this problem, reveal it to me and help me to understand it. Remove any wedge of confusion that has created

misunderstanding or miscommunication. Where there is behavior that needs to change in either of us, I pray You would enable that change to happen. As much as I want to hang on to my anger toward him because I feel it is justified, I want to do what *You* want. I release all those feelings to You. Give me a renewed sense of love for him and words to heal this situation.”

If you feel you are able, try this little experiment and see what happens. Pray for your husband every day for a month using each one of the thirty-one areas of prayer focus I have included in this book. Pray a chapter a day. Ask God to pour out His blessings on him and fill you both with His love. See if your heart doesn't soften toward him. Notice if his attitude toward you doesn't change as well. Observe whether your relationship isn't running more smoothly. If you have trouble making that kind of prayer commitment, think of it from the Lord's perspective. Seeing your husband through God's eyes—not just as your husband, but as God's child, a son whom the Lord loves—can be a great revelation. If someone called and asked you to pray for his or her son, you would do it, wouldn't you? Well, God is asking.

“Shut Up and Pray”

There is a time for everything, it says in the Bible. And it is never more true than in a marriage, especially when it comes to the words we say. There is a time to speak and a time *not* to speak, and happy is the man whose wife can discern between the two. Anyone who has been married for any length of time realizes that there are things that are better left unsaid. A wife has the ability to hurt her husband more deeply than anyone else can, and he can do the same to her. No matter how much apology, the words cannot be erased. They can only be forgiven and that is not always easy. Sometimes anything we say will only hinder the flow of what God wants to do, so it's best to... well... shut up and pray.

When Michael and I were first married, I didn't say much if I felt

something was wrong. I stuffed my feelings inside. After our first child was born, I became increasingly vocal. But the more I voiced my objections and opinions, the more he resisted and the more we would argue. Whatever I said not only accomplished nothing in the area I wanted it to, it had the opposite effect. It took me a number of years to learn what millions of women have learned over the centuries. *Nagging doesn't work!* Criticizing doesn't work. Sometimes, just plain talking doesn't accomplish anything either. I've found that prayer is the only thing that *always* works. The safeguard you have with prayer is that you have to go through God to do it. This means you can't get away with a bad attitude, wrong thinking, or incorrect motives. When you pray, God reveals anything in your personality that is resistant to His order of things.

My husband will not do something he doesn't want to do. And if he ends up doing something he doesn't want to do, his immediate family members will pay for it. If there is anything I really want him to do, I've learned to pray about it until I have God's peace in my heart *before* I ask. Sometimes God changes my heart about it, or shows me a different way so I don't have to say anything. If I do need to say something, I try not to just blurt it out. I pray first for God's leading.

It took me a long time to figure this out, however. It happened one day when I came across the Proverb, "Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman" (Proverbs 21:19). For *some reason* it struck a nerve.

"But, Lord," I questioned, "what about 'Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed' [Proverbs 27:5]? Don't we wives have to tell our husbands when something is wrong?"

He replied, "There is... a time for every purpose under heaven... a time to keep silence and a time to speak" (Ecclesiastes 3:1,7). "The problem is you don't know when to do either. And you don't know how to do it in love."

"Okay, Lord," I said. "Show me when to speak and when to just keep quiet and pray."

The first opportunity for this came right away. I had started a new weekly women's prayer group in my home, and it was so life-changing I suggested to my husband that he start a similar group for men. But he wouldn't hear of it.

"I don't have time," was his not-too-pleased-at-the-idea answer.

The more I talked about it, the more irritated Michael became. After getting my "Be quiet and pray" directions from God, I decided to try that approach. I stopped talking about it and started praying. I also asked my prayer group to pray along with me. It was more than two years after I stopped mentioning it to him and started praying that Michael abruptly announced one day he was organizing a weekly men's prayer group. He still doesn't know I prayed. Even though it took longer than I would have liked, it did happen. And there was peace in the waiting, which I wouldn't have had if I had not kept quiet.

Queen Esther in the Bible prayed, fasted, and sought God's timing before she approached her husband, the king, about a very important matter. There was a lot at stake and she knew it. She didn't run in and scream, "Your hoodlum friends are going to ruin our lives!" Rather she prayed first and then ministered to him in love, while God prepared his heart. The Lord will always give us words to say, and show us when to say them if we ask Him. Timing is everything.

I've known people who use the excuse of "just being honest" to devastate others with their words. The Bible says, "A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back" (Proverbs 29:11). In other words, it's foolish to share every feeling and thought. Being honest doesn't mean you have to be completely frank in your every comment. That hurts people. While honesty is a requirement for a successful marriage, telling your husband everything that is wrong with him is not only ill-advised, it probably doesn't reveal the complete truth. The total truth is from God's perspective and He, undoubtedly, doesn't have the same problem with some of your husband's

actions as you do. Our goal must not be to get our husbands to do what *we* want, but rather to release them to God so He can get them to do what *He* wants.

Distinguish carefully between what is truly right and wrong. If it doesn't fall clearly into either of those categories, keep your personal opinions to yourself. Or pray about them and then, as the Lord leads, reveal them for calm discussion. The Bible says, "Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few" (Ecclesiastes 5:2). There are times when we are just to listen and not offer advice, to support and not offer constructive criticism.

Not for a moment am I suggesting that you become a timid doormat who doesn't ever confront your husband with the truth—especially when it's for his greater good. (More about that in chapter 30.) By all means you must clearly communicate your thoughts and feelings. But once he has heard them, don't continue to press him until it becomes a point of contention and strife.

If you *do* have to say words that are hard to hear, ask God to help you discern when your husband would be most open to hearing them. Pray for the right words and for his heart to be totally receptive. I know that's difficult to do if you have a few choice words you're dying to let loose. But hard as it may seem, it's best to let God hear them first so He can temper them with His Spirit. This is especially true when talking has ceased altogether and every word only brings more pain. I wish I had learned earlier to pray before I spoke. My words too often set up a defensive reaction in my husband that produced harsh words we both regret. He received my suggestions as pressure to do or be something, even though I always had his best interests at heart. It had to come to him from God.

When we live by the power of God rather than our flesh, we don't have to strive for power with our words. "For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power" (1 Corinthians 4:20). It's not the words

we speak that make a difference, it is the power of God accompanying them. You'll be amazed at how much power your words have when you pray before you speak them. You'll be even more amazed at what can happen when you shut up and let God work.

Believer or Not

If your husband is not a believer, you probably already know how much good it does to keep talking to him about the Lord if he didn't respond the first number of times. It's not that you can't ever say anything to him, but if what you say is always met with indifference or irritation, the next step is to keep silent and pray. The Bible says a wife can win over her husband without saying anything, because what he *observes* in his wife speaks more loudly than what she tells him. "They, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives" (1 Peter 3:1-2).

God says He speaks of things that are not as though they were. You can do that, too. You can say, "I'm not going to pretend, but I'm going to speak of things that are *not* part of my husband's life as though they *were* a part of it. Even though he doesn't have faith, I'm going to pray for him as if he does." Of course you can't force him to do something he doesn't want to do, but you can access God's power through praying for His voice to penetrate your husband's soul. No matter how long you have to pray for your husband to come to know the Lord, even if it takes his whole life, the time will not be wasted. In the meantime, whether your husband is a believer or not, you can still pray all the prayers in this book for him and expect to see significant answers to them.

Creating a Home

I don't care how liberated you are, when you are married there will always be two areas that will ultimately be your responsibility: home and children. Even if you are the only one working and your husband stays home to keep the house and tend the kids, you will

still be expected to see that the heart of your home is a peaceful sanctuary—a source of contentment, acceptance, rejuvenation, nurturing, rest, and love for your family. On top of this, you will also be expected to be sexually appealing, a good cook, a great mother, and physically, emotionally, and spiritually fit. It's overwhelming to most women, but the good news is that you don't have to do it all on your own. You can seek God's help.

Ask the Lord to show you how to make your home a safe haven that builds up your family—a place where creativity flows and communication is ongoing. Ask God to help you keep the house clean, the laundry done, the kitchen in order, the pantry and the refrigerator full, and the beds made. These are basic things a man may not compliment his wife on every day (or ever), but he will notice if they are *not* done. My husband may not look in the cupboard for a lightbulb or a battery for months. But when he does, he wants it to be there. Nor does he want to come home late from work one night and find that there is no bread for a sandwich. I do my best to make sure it is there. I ask God to help me maintain a house that my husband is pleased to come home to and bring his friends. It's not necessary to have expensive furniture or a decorator in order to do all that. My first home was small and had secondhand furniture I bought from yard sales. I painted the entire place myself (with the help of a girlfriend) and made it look attractive. It just takes some thought and a little care.

Part of making a house a home is allowing your husband to be the head so you can be the heart. Trying to be both is too much. God placed the husband as the head over the family, whether he deserves it or not and whether he rises up to take his position or not. It's God's order of things. This doesn't mean that one position is more important than the other. They work together. If your husband is to be the head of the house, you must allow him that headship. If you are to be the heart of the home, you still must take the steps necessary to do so, even if you are a major contributor to the

financial support. Trying to reverse that keeps a constant struggle going.

This doesn't mean that the wife can't work and the husband can't care for the home; it's the attitudes of the heart and head that makes the difference. There were weeks of time during the finishing of each book I've written when my husband took care of the house and the children so I could meet the deadline. It never minimized his headship or caused me to usurp his position. It was something he did for me. There were times he needed me to work so he could rest. It's what I did for him. It's a delicate balance for most people, so it's best to pray that the integrity of the two positions in the home—head and heart—are not compromised.

Keeping order in the home doesn't mean it has to be perfect, but it shouldn't be out of control. If you are working as hard as he is to bring home a paycheck, the responsibilities should be shared in the home. If he doesn't want to share them, spending a certain amount of money for someone to help you a few hours a week is a lot cheaper than a divorce, a chiropractor, a therapist, a medical doctor, or a funeral. Ask God to show you about that.

Everything I've said about the home goes for your body, soul, and spirit as well. Some effort must be put into maintaining them. I once heard a radio talk show where a woman called in to complain to a popular psychologist that her husband told her he no longer found her attractive. The host said, "What are you doing to make yourself attractive?" The caller had no answer. The point is, being attractive doesn't just happen. Even the most gorgeous women in the world do much to maintain their attractiveness. Queen Esther was one of the most beautiful women in her country and she still spent a year beautifying herself before she met the king.

We have to ask ourselves the same question. "What am I doing to make myself attractive to my husband?" Do I keep myself clean and smelling good? Do I see that my internal self is cleansed and rejuvenated with regular exercise? Do I preserve my strength and vitality

with a healthful diet? Do I dress attractively? And most important: Do I spend time alone with God every day? I guarantee that the more time you spend with the Lord, the more radiant you will become. “Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised” (Proverbs 31:30).

You can't afford not to make this investment in yourself, your health, and your future. It's not selfish to do it. It's selfish *not* to do it. Pray for God to show you what steps to take and then enable you to take them. Invite the Holy Spirit to dwell in you *and* your home.

Letting Go of Expectations

Shortly after we were married, my husband called from work and said he wanted me to prepare a certain chicken dish for dinner. I went to the store, got the food, prepared the dish, and when he came home, he walked in the door and said bluntly, “I don't feel like chicken tonight. I want lamb chops.” I needn't tell you the thoughts that went through my mind because I'm sure you already know them. This was not an isolated incident. Similar ones happened far too frequently. I can't count the number of times Michael promised to be home for dinner and called ten minutes *after* dinner was ready to say he was going to work late and would eat out with his coworkers. I finally learned that it did no good to be angry, hurt, or resentful. That only made matters worse. It made him defensive because he thought I didn't understand his situation. I realized it was healthier for both of us if I rearranged my expectations. From then on, I prepared meals as if only I and the children would be eating them. If Michael was able to join us, it was a pleasant surprise. If he didn't, I could live with it.

I've learned that when disappointing things happen, it's best to remind myself of my husband's good qualities. I recount how he sometimes helps with the household chores and the cooking. He is faithful and does not give me reason to doubt it. He is a believer who goes to church, reads his Bible, prays, and has high moral standards.

He loves me and our children. He uses his talents for God's glory. He is a good and generous provider. Things could be a lot worse, so I won't complain about whether he's home for dinner or not.

I think if I could help a new wife in any area, it would be to discourage her from coming into her marriage with a big list of expectations and then being upset when her husband doesn't live up to them. Of course there are some basics that should be agreed upon before the wedding date, such as fidelity, financial support, honesty, kindness, basic decency, high moral standards, physical and emotional love, and protection. When you don't get those things, you can ask for them. When you still don't get them, you can pray. But when it comes to specifics, you can't require one person to meet all of your needs. The pressure to do that and fulfill your dreams at the same time can be overwhelming to a man. Instead, take your needs to God in prayer and look to *Him* for the answers. If we try to control our husbands by having a big list for them to live up to and then are angry and disappointed when they can't, *we* are the ones in error. The biggest problems in my marriage occurred when my expectations of what I thought Michael should be or do didn't coincide with the reality of who he was.

Let go of as many expectations as possible. The changes you try to make happen in your husband, or that your husband tries to make in himself to please you, are doomed to failure and will bring disappointment for you both. Instead, ask God to make any necessary changes. He will do a far better job because "whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it" (Ecclesiastes 3:14). Accept your husband the way he is and pray for him to grow. Then when change happens, it will be because God has worked it in him and it will be lasting. "My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him" (Psalm 62:5). Your greatest expectations must be from God, not your husband.

With All Due Respect

It's interesting that God requires the husband to *love* his wife, but the wife is required to have *respect* for her husband. "Let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband" (Ephesians 5:33). I assume no woman would marry a man she didn't love, but too often a wife loses respect for her husband after they've been married awhile. Loss of respect seems to precede loss of love and is more hurtful to a man than we realize.

The consequences of losing respect for your husband can be very serious. King David's wife, Michal, watched her husband dancing for joy before the Lord in front of the people, without his kingly clothing and in his undergarments, as the ark of the covenant was being brought into the city. Michal not only didn't share his joy, she had contempt for him (2 Samuel 6:16). She was critical instead of trying to understand the situation from God's perspective. She paid a dear price for her lack of respect; God's judgment caused her to be unable to ever bear children. I believe we not only bring defeat into our marriages and to our husbands when we don't have respect for them, but it shuts the door to new life in us as well.

In another example, Queen Vashti refused to go to the king at his command. The king was giving a feast for his friends, he was in a party mood, and he wanted to show off his beautiful wife. All he asked of her was that she put on her royal clothes, don her royal crown, and make a royal appearance to the people he was entertaining. She declined, knowing full well it would be humiliating for him. "Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command brought by his eunuchs; therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him" (Esther 1:12). The result was that Vashti lost her position as queen. She not only wronged her husband, the king, but the people as well. Unless a wife wants to lose her position as queen of her husband's heart, and hurt her family and friends besides, she mustn't

humiliate her husband no matter how much she thinks he deserves it. The price is too high.

If this has already happened to you, and you know you've shown disrespect for your husband, confess it to God right now. Say, "Lord, I confess I do not esteem my husband the way Your Word says to. There is a wall in my heart that I know was erected as a protection against being hurt. But I am ready to let it come down so that my heart can heal. I confess the times I have shown a lack of respect for him. I confess my disrespectful attitude and words as sin against You. Show me how to dismantle this barrier over my emotions that keeps me from having the unconditional love You want me to have. Tear down the wall of hardness around my heart and show me how to respect my husband the way You want me to. Give me *Your* heart for him, Lord, and help me to see him the way You see him."

Praying like this will free you to see your man's potential for greatness, as opposed to his flaws. It will enable you to say something positive that will encourage, build up, give life, and make the marriage better. Love is diminished if we dwell on the negatives. Love grows if we focus on the positive. When you have God's heart for your husband, you will be able to see through new eyes. There are times when you can't understand where your husband is coming from, what he is feeling, and why he is doing the things he does, unless you have the discernment of God. Ask God to give it to you.

When you are praying for yourself—his wife—remember this model of a good wife from the Bible. It says she takes care of her home and runs it well. She knows how to buy and sell and make wise investments. She keeps herself healthy and energetic and dresses attractively. She works diligently and has skills which are marketable. She is giving and conscientiously prepares for the future. She contributes to her husband's good reputation. She is strong, solid, honorable, and not afraid of growing older. She speaks wisely and kindly. She doesn't sit around doing nothing, but carefully watches what

goes on in her home. Her children and her husband praise her. She doesn't rely on charm and beauty but knows that the fear of the Lord is what is most attractive. She supports her husband and still has a fruitful life of her own which speaks loudly for itself (Proverbs 31).

This is an amazing woman, the kind of woman we can become only through God's enablement and our own surrendering. The bottom line is that she is a woman whose husband trusts her because "she does him good and not evil all the days of her life." I believe the most important "good" a wife can do for her husband is pray. Shall we?

Prayer

Lord, help me to be a good wife. I fully realize that I don't have what it takes to be one without Your help. Take my selfishness, impatience, and irritability and turn them into kindness, long-suffering, and the willingness to bear all things. Take my old emotional habits, mind-sets, automatic reactions, rude assumptions, and self-protective stance, and make me patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled. Take the hardness of my heart and break down the walls with Your battering ram of revelation. Give me a new heart and work in me Your love, peace, and joy (Galatians 5:22-23). I am not able to rise above who I am at this moment. Only You can transform me.

Show me where there is sin in my heart, especially with regard to my husband. I confess the times I've been unloving, critical, angry, resentful, disrespectful, or unforgiving toward him. Help me to put aside any hurt, anger, or disappointment I feel and forgive him the way You do—totally and completely, no looking back. Make me a tool of reconciliation, peace, and healing in this marriage. Enable us to communicate well and rescue us from the threshold of separation where the realities of divorce begin.

Make me my husband's helpmate, companion, champion, friend, and support. Help me to create a peaceful, restful, safe place for him to come home to. Teach me how to take care of myself and stay attractive to him. Grow me into a creative and confident woman who is rich in mind, soul, and spirit. Make me the kind of woman he can be proud to say is his wife.

I lay all my expectations at Your cross. I release my husband from the burden of fulfilling me in areas where I should be looking to You. Help me to accept him the way he is and not try to change him. I realize that in some ways he may never change, but at the same time, I release him to change in ways I never thought he could. I leave any changing that needs to be done in Your hands, fully accepting that neither of us is perfect and never will be. Only You, Lord, are perfect, and I look to You to perfect us.

Teach me how to pray for my husband and make my prayers a true language of love. Where love has died, create new love between us. Show me what unconditional love really is and how to communicate it in a way he can clearly perceive. Bring unity between us so that we can be in agreement about everything (Amos 3:3). May the God of patience and comfort grant us to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus (Romans 15:5). Make us a team, not pursuing separate, competitive, or independent lives, but working together, overlooking each other's faults and weaknesses for the greater good of the marriage. Help us to pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another (Romans 14:19). May we be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

I pray that our commitment to You and to one another will grow stronger and more passionate every day. Enable him to be the head of the home as You made him to be, and show me how to support and respect him as he rises to that place of leadership. Help me to understand his dreams and see things from his perspective. Reveal to me what he wants and needs and show me potential problems before they arise. Breathe Your life into this marriage.

Make me a new person, Lord. Give me a fresh perspective, a positive outlook, and a renewed relationship with the man You've given me. Help me see him with new eyes, new appreciation, new love, new compassion, and new acceptance. Give my husband a new wife, and let it be me.

In Jesus' name I pray.

POWER TOOLS

Whatever things you ask when you pray,
believe that you receive them, and you will have them.
And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against
anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven
may also forgive you your trespasses.

MARK 11:24-25

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted,
forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

EPHESIANS 4:32

Ask, and it will be given to you;
seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.
For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds,
and to him who knocks it will be opened.

MATTHEW 7:7-8

Through wisdom a house is built,
and by understanding it is established;
by knowledge the rooms are filled
with all precious and pleasant riches.

PROVERBS 24:3-4

Let us not grow weary while doing good,
for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

GALATIANS 6:9