

A man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light blue shirt and a purple tie, is shown in profile from the chest up. He has a thoughtful expression and his hands are clasped together near his chin. The background is a blurred office setting with a window.

# PLAY THE MAN

Joanna Barratt

## *About the Author*

After a traumatic childhood, Joanna Barratt grew up rebellious and independent. With a successful career as a singer/songwriter behind her, Joanna's life took a massive turn when at the age of 37 she married and, 3 years later, had her first child. Tough on the exterior, she was still a little girl inside, and found herself floundering, vulnerable and unable to cope with everyday family life.

Joanna speaks candidly of her own needs and how her husband Maurice proved to be “the strength of God demonstrated in the physical form of a man” that she needed to fashion her and re-educate her thinking.





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*by Joanna Barratt*

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# Foreword

A few years ago I had the opportunity to talk with several men who were experiencing marital difficulties. The alarming thing about these situations was that not only were the men all Christians, half of them were ministers!

I spoke to my friend Maurice Barratt about my concern for these men and the many others like them, and Maurice and I agreed to organize a one-day seminar on “Men and Marriage”. The day was a success, so much so that some of the results from that one seminar remain today in the form of healed and restored marriages.

We realised that men needed help in many other areas besides marriage, and began holding seminars on a regular basis, covering a number of themes – Men and Power, Men and Conflict, Men and Money – and we were very encouraged by the feedback we received from men who attended. When we held a seminar on the theme of Men and Relationships, I asked Joanna if she would talk to the men about heir relationships with their wives. I wanted to hear from a woman’s perspective.

Joanna’s talk at that seminar was a revelation to the men. However, it was apparent that she had much more to say than could be covered in just one seminar. So I am delighted that this book has come out. Men know what they want in a woman. But they probably do not know what a woman is looking for in a man – especially in a husband. In this book,

through telling her personal and sometimes painful experiences, Joanna explains something of the mystery of a woman – what makes her tick – and in doing so provides much needed insight and practical wisdom. Any man – married or single – who reads these pages with an honest and open heart will find much to enable him to be not only the husband that his wife wants, but also the man God intended him to be.

Geoff Bates

Pastor, Culcheth Christian Fellowship

# Introduction

When Maurice, my husband, and Geoff Bates asked me to speak to a group of men at a seminar about their relationships with their wives, I was rather bemused, and asked what they wanted me to say. Geoff elaborated, “Just tell them what a woman is looking for from her husband ... from a woman’s point of view.” I gave the talk as requested, and many men confessed that their eyes had been opened to issues they had never been aware of before. But while I was preparing my message I realised that there was too much to say in just one hour, there was so much ground to cover. So I have committed pen to paper, and this is the fruit of my thoughts. I have tried to be honest, to bring out the failures as well as the successes in my own life and marriage, together with some basic biblical principles which would be beneficial for every married couple to be well versed in.

I am very fortunate that God gave me Maurice to be my husband, and not some bully who could have probably knocked Christianity and all faith in marriage out of me. But I am convinced that people need flesh-and-blood, real-life role models to copy if they are to bring up their households to the glory and honour of God. The world we live in is doing its best to destroy the family unit. We need to band together to give encouragement, counsel and practical help to those in the faith who are struggling.

God made women to be different from men. Perhaps as you listen to the voice of a woman talking about her own experiences, you will understand what on earth is going on inside your wife's head. In the following pages I open up my own heart and let you know what helped and what sometimes hindered me in my quest to become a good wife, a good mother, and above all else a godly woman of whom my husband could be proud.

Men and husbands, please do not feel threatened by what you may think these pages contain. My intention is only to encourage you and make you aware of the silent cry in the heart of most wives, not to fire the bullets of the women who knew I was going to write this book and asked me to say a few things on their behalf! In fact, there is perhaps more for me to say to women concerning how they should treat their husbands than there is to say to you men. In my opinion, women today have veered a long way from the biblical pattern, and cause more friction in the home by their unsubmitive and rebellious attitudes than they realise. But that is another story, and perhaps another book!

The saying is that "behind every good man there is a good woman", but I could also reverse that and say that behind every good woman is a good man. A strange and awesome thing happens when we live or associate with someone over a period of time – we grow to become like them, in our characters and sometimes even in our appearance, whether we like it or not. Make sure the influence rubbing off on your wife and your children is one that you will not be ashamed of. Men, women need your help, so set

the standard and learn to ...

Play the Man!

# *Part 1*

# 1

## *The difference between men and women*

Men and women are **human** beings. Bland statement, but there is a world of meaning in it.

When God made Adam, he made him a unique being. Nothing else which God made could be classed in the same category as Adam. We are not animals, as some teachers and scientists would like to tell us – we are human beings created in the image of God, unlike anything else. *“And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.’ And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof”* (Genesis 2:18-20). Even though God formed animals and fowl out of the ground in the same way He had done with Adam, they were not suitable to meet Adam’s needs; he couldn’t identify with them because they were different from him.

So – Plan ‘B’ – God decided to create another

human being using Adam's own body instead of the ground ... *"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh'"* (Genesis 2:21-24).

How wonderful must that first relationship between man and woman have been! Adam was not split into two when he was put into a deep sleep by God. God only took from Adam one rib, and out of that one bone He created a woman. She was totally different, with a completely separate personality and identity. Something had been given to Adam which was additional, not just himself wrapped up in another body. When they came together, the bit that was missing from Adam came back into his life, along with a whole lot more that God had blessed him with. Eve was meant to be a supporter, helper, lover, so much more than either a whole Adam, or any of the animals and fowl, could have been to him.

When God made the animals He made both male and female so that they could reproduce their own kind. When God made Adam, He made one solitary man who could not reproduce on his own. Only when Eve came on the scene was this made possible ... and she was given her complementary organs

specifically for this purpose, to be the mother of all living human beings. Eve was one of a kind. She was meant to belong to Adam. In other words, she was not meant to be on her own, but to come under the protection and authority of a man.



## 2

# *The celibate life*

How idyllic could life have been if only Adam had not been given Eve? It seems, from reading the scriptures, that God had originally intended Adam to be like Himself. God is in heaven surrounded by numerous creatures – angels, cherubim, seraphim, etc. – totally different beings from Himself. God also gave Adam numerous animals and creatures to be his companions, but He saw that these didn't satisfy Adam's innermost longing. God Himself must have understood this longing, as He was in the same situation, surrounded by many creatures, all of whom were different from Him. So God gave Adam the woman – a bit of Adam with a whole lot more. What was intended as the blessing of God to Adam eventually brought about a breakdown of communication between God and Adam. The love which Adam had for Eve was so strong that, even though he wasn't deceived by the serpent in the garden, he would rather have lost his relationship with God than lose Eve and chose to enter into her sin in order to keep her. *“For Adam was first formed, then Even. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression”* (1 Timothy 2:13-14).

It is my understanding that Adam was created by God, for God, and the relationship could have been wonderful if only this other companion had not replaced God. When asked by a lawyer what he considered to be the greatest commandment, *“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment”* (Matt. 22:37-38). To my way of thinking Jesus was emphasizing that if a man truly had a relationship with God which was all consuming, where he loved God with all his heart, soul and mind, then there would be no necessity for anyone else. Indeed He also said, *“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple”* (Luke 14:26).

When I look through the Bible I can note a few individuals who really stand out as being mightily used by God who were not married – Paul, John the Baptist, and especially Jesus. Why was this? Jesus said, *“the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the son of man hath not where to lay his head”* (Matt. 8:20). Foxes have holes so that they can breed, and birds of the air build nests so that they can lay and hatch eggs. He was saying in essence that He had come to do the will of God, and this didn’t include setting up home and bringing up a family. He had been commissioned by God for a specific task and had to have his mind completely focussed. The same with John and Paul. A wife and family would have given them problems, there

would have been divided loyalties which would have caused awful conflict and unnecessary pain. These men were in no doubt of their calling.

When Paul the Apostle was struck down on the Damascus Road he was told to go to Ananias, a disciple of Jesus living in the city of Damascus. Ananias had also been spoken to by God in a vision in preparation for this visit of Saul. In Acts 9:15-16 God says to Ananias, *“Go thy way for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.”* And in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians he states, when talking about the duties of marriage, *“For I would that all men were even as I myself ... I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn”* (1 Corinthians 7:7-9).

John the Baptist knew he was special. He was borne to aged parents who had been visited by the angel Gabriel to prepare them for this event. His father had even been struck dumb because he had doubted that this could happen at his advanced age. From being very young John went out into the wilderness and lived on locusts and honey, in a similar manner to Elijah who also seemed to be a wild, unmarried man. When John did make a public appearance he stood out because he just wasn’t conformed in any way to the world, didn’t have their values, fashions, manner of speaking, responsibilities – he was just

an untouched, untainted vessel for God's specific use. His ministry only lasted 6 months, the world couldn't stand his light. At the age of 30 he was martyred and his light snuffed out, but mercifully his heart was not torn at having to leave behind a grief-stricken widow or fatherless children. He was emotionally free to fulfill God's plan and purpose for his life and death.

Jesus went missing at the age of 12 when on a pilgrimage with his parents to Jerusalem. When his parents eventually found him in the temple, he was sitting in the midst of the astonished doctors, both hearing and asking them questions.

*“And his mother said unto him, ‘Son, why hast thou dealt with us thus? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.’ And he said unto them, ‘How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?’”* (Luke 2:48-49).

From an early age Jesus knew who He was and occupied Himself with progressing the purpose God had planned for Him. On occasions He had tried to share with His disciples snippets of what was to come, but they weren't mature enough spiritually to be able to accept and embrace what He said. Indeed, Simon Peter, trying to correct Jesus, told Him off for even suggesting such things.

*“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him, and*

*began to rebuke him, saying, ‘Be is far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee.’ But He turned, and said unto Peter, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.’”* (Matthew 16:21-23)

# 3

## *Marriage - the biggest decision in life*

So then, should we get married at all? Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 7:1-2, *“Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: it is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.”*

In verse 28 he goes on further to say, *“But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh.”*

I was brought up in a very violent environment and consequently was afraid of marriage. At the age of 17 my oldest sister married the first Christian boy who proposed to her, thinking this would be the perfect way to escape her present family situation. Unfortunately, after having 3 children and emigrating to Australia, the marriage ended in divorce. For my sister the marriage could well have been one of convenience; she and her husband were in reality poles apart in their ambitions and desires, and she still hankered for her unfulfilled years of youthful freedom.

My only brother, who was 4 years older than I,

also married at the very young age of 19, as the girl he was courting had become pregnant to him. She too was very young, only 17 years of age, and after 3 children and many problems, that also ended in divorce. I never saw marriage as an escape route. Indeed, I viewed marriage as a transfer from the frying pan to the fire!

I had gone to services and children’s meetings at a Brethren Church since I was about 5 or 6 years old and my parents had begun to attend a Pentecostal Church when I was 9, so I had a good understanding of what the Bible said about how a wife should behave towards her husband. Especially as, during nearly every row between my mother and father, the ‘job description’ of a wife would be brought up ... *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord”* (Ephesians 5:22 & Colossians. 3:18). And a ‘holy war’ would break out where they would both fight with scripture to smash each other into subjection. Mother was very quick with her tongue, but Dad would always have the last say as, although his tongue was not so sharp, he threatened and sometimes used his fists.

I knew divorce was taboo as a Christian. If you married in the sight of God it was for life, and you were expected to *“be in subjection to your own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord”* (1 Pet. 3:5-6) ... no matter what his disposition or mood. The bible seemed to make it quite clear that a wife was a man’s property – as were his camels, cattle, etc., and he had all

authority over her. Of course, the bible says many things concerning how husbands ought to treat their wives, but if he didn't keep his end of the bargain, that was no justification for a wife to be rebellious.

I did not like this aspect of marriage. It did not fit in with my western mentality. It appeared to me that women signed all their rights away when they signed their marriage certificate, which seemed an absolutely stupid thing to do. How do you know what your man is going to be like when you have become legally bound to him? It is a known fact that the courting man and the married man are two different people, as are the courting woman and the married woman, so why take the risk? Better to steer well clear, remain single and free.

Sounds great, but the bible absolutely forbids fornication and promiscuity. This also does not fit in with our western thinking, but if we want to think like westerners, then why bother reading the bible? Answer – because we want to be Christians ... Or at least, I did! What I read I didn't like, but that didn't mean I had any options. Or did I?

1 Corinthians 7:32-35 says, *“He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your own profit; not*

*that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.”*

This indeed was my option. I always knew a sense of purpose and destiny right from being a child. Nothing else captivated my imagination like stories from the bible and deep down inside my spirit there was a God-given longing to serve Him. When I was 16 years old my parents proposed to emigrate to Australia, but I adamantly refused to go with them. I had become very involved in the Pentecostal Church we had attended for the past 7 years and, apart from being the church organist and singing in the music group, I was also the Pastor's secretary which afforded me the tremendous privilege of meeting privately with him at his house where he had an office in his cellar. His family had welcomed me into their environment and I felt a sense of safety and security with them that I had never experienced before. I did not want to lose this relationship for anything.

As my refusal to accompany my parents to Australia presented problems for them progressing with their arrangements, I was told that, because I was under age to be left on my own, somebody would have to become my legal guardian in order for my parents to be free to leave me behind in England. The Pastor of the church stepped in at this point and signed all the necessary documents to take responsibility for me. I left home, got settled into a flat, and served the Lord with all my heart in the church. I loved it. I had time and freedom to

commit myself whole-heartedly to all the activities and grew in God at a tremendous rate. When I was 18, the group I was in, “Sharon People”, did a tour of Holland. The Pastor preached and we provided the music. It was a tremendous experience, and the very first time I had ever been outside England. This was a new beginning for me and from then on I would give up my vacations to tour with Pastor and the group as we went out on evangelism.

Needless to say, the older I became, the more aware I was of the opposite sex. But with every involvement I realised that I could not have my money and the cake at the same time. If I wanted to serve God and have a ministry I would have to give up marriage (as the boys I had dated had become intensely jealous of my involvement and their exclusion), or to have a husband I would have to give up the ministry.

My mind was made up. I knew where I felt most fulfilled – serving God in the ministry. But then I fell in love with a man who was not a Christian and my emotions became stronger than my principles. I knew that ministry and marriage could not possibly work, but I was so afraid of sinning against God that in desperation I accepted his proposal to get married.

I wrestled in prayer with God, pouring out my heart to Him, sharing my awful physical needs, and knew without any doubt that he understood what was happening and didn’t condemn me. “Father,” I said, “I love him and have decided I am going to marry him. But if You don’t want it, then You stop

it.”

That was all I could pray because my emotions had rendered me powerless to fight.

Very shortly after making this decision I went away for a week to fast and pray because my life was in a turmoil. But on the very journey to my retreat God spoke to me and told me to marry Maurice. I knew without doubt it was God’s voice. I also knew without doubt that I would do it. Over the course of the next week my spirit grew stronger and stronger as my emotions grew weaker and weaker and God prepared me to face my fiancé. When he came to take me home after the retreat he knew immediately that something had happened to me. I explained as tenderly as I could the change that had come over me but I couldn’t ease his pain and his tears tore at my heart. But when God had spoken to me He had also given me the strength to be able to carry out what He had told me to do. I knew that I didn’t have an option and that doing what God wanted was the thing that would bring both me and this dear man I loved the most happiness.

It was only when I got home that the reality of what I had done hit me. The pain was unbelievable, but I knew there was no going back. I had made the right decision because I knew I was acting in obedience to God. Maurice was the only son of the Pastor of the Pentecostal Church, 7 years my senior and had already been married. We had worked together in the church and group since I was 15 years old. The group had changed formation many times over the years we were together, but Maurice and I were the only ones who had endured

right through. Indeed there was a time when there were only the 3 of us left – the Pastor, Maurice and myself. We believed with all our hearts that God had a destiny for us to fulfil. Together with his father, we had prayed together, fasted together and sought God together. Maurice was my best friend. Things had also been happening in Maurice’s life and his marriage had come to an end. He, too, was told explicitly to marry me and God confirmed it to us both via outside sources.

Deciding who to marry is the biggest decision anyone will have to make in this life, apart from making the decision to follow Jesus Christ and commit their lives to God. If God does not tell you who to marry, then you have no right to complain about your lot in life when things go sadly amiss. If you make your bed, you will have to lie in it. The bible says that the single person should not seek to be married. Leave all that to God, let Him choose the partner for you. Let Him bring the partner to you. Don’t pester Him concerning a spouse; *“seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you”* (Matthew 6:33).

We are all basically selfish and often get married for the wrong reasons. Men and women look for entirely different things in a marriage. A man often looks for a beautiful, curvy, vivacious blonde who he can show off to all his friends – whereas a woman is often looking for her tall, dark, mysterious, handsome stranger who will sweep her off her feet. I was looking for that too, but God gave me Maurice

... who was shorter than me, balding, totally unmysterious and strong willed. Obviously, God knew what I needed! Exactly what I needed!

# *Part 2*

# 4

## *The Bud*

I know women have to submit to their husbands, for God has placed the man in the position of being in authority over the entire household. But how can a man help his wife to submit so that he earns her respect, rather than beating her into submission which will cause her to despise him?

I have searched my heart and tried to give an honest appraisal of the ways in which Maurice has either helped or hindered me in my desire to please God and be an obedient and loving wife. I don't think I could have handled marriage if I had wed at a young age as I was a product of my environment and had turned out to be rebellious, headstrong, arrogant, and a very insecure person who could not accept any kind of authority. My parents, who had not had any good role models to emulate, had not prepared me for marriage – God had to do that, and it took a long time to knock out the wrong attitudes and replace them with the right ones.

It has not been easy for either Maurice or myself, but God was very gracious and allowed us 22 years of friendship before our marriage to enable us to gain some understanding of each other. But that's OK, God has all our days numbered and knows how long we've been allotted to fulfil the task He's given

us to do.

Permit me to say from the outset that there is no reason in this modern generation why any woman would want to be a submissive, obedient wife. We are living in a day and age when everyone has equal rights and opportunities. Actually, women have more rights than men at present because the pendulum has swung from one extreme to the other, and by giving women rights, it only follows that some of the rights that men once had have been taken away. Women can vote, occupy seats in parliament and even run countries. Bosses are not allowed to discriminate against women in businesses, and if a woman is capable of doing the same job as a man, whether it be bricklaying or plumbing, then a boss has no right to refuse her employment.

Our society has gone mad and brought about a reversal of roles. No longer is a woman expected to stay at home and keep house. She has a right to pursue a career and in many cases can earn far more than her husband, who can now be termed a 'househusband' if they decide she will be the breadwinner. She doesn't even need a man to produce children, she can be artificially inseminated in the privacy of her own apartment and raise her offspring without any male help. She can take a pill to allow her to be as promiscuous as she wants without the fear of becoming pregnant. But if things do go amiss, she also has the right to abort, up to a very late stage in her pregnancy, any unwanted child she is carrying in her womb. She does not need to confine her relationships to males, she can be as

free and abandoned as she wishes, and the age we live in sees this as progress and enlightenment. God help us! God, please, please help us!

Romans 12 starts off by saying, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* Again, I say that there is no reason why any woman would want to be a submissive, obedient wife ... UNLESS she wants to become part of the Bride of Christ, to please and serve God and be a follower of Jesus Christ ... In other words, UNLESS SHE WANTS TO BE A CHRISTIAN! And if she really wants to be a Christian she will have to have her mind renewed so that she does not think like the world.

Some years before I was married, Maurice and I had been invited to minister at a church in Scotland. Actually, on the particular Sunday morning we had been booked, they were also holding a wedding ceremony. The bride and groom were strong Christians, but because they both had so many non-Christian family members, they decided to get married on a Sunday morning and incorporate their wedding into the normal service so that their relations could be part of an actual church service. Not a bad way to witness!

The service progressed in the usual way. There

was a time of praise and worship, I sang and Maurice preached, but it was the words of the minister that struck me as he spoke during the marriage ceremony. He looked directly at the groom and charged him with his duties as the head of 'his house'. He told him in no uncertain terms that God had placed in his hands a bud (his wife), and it was up to him how she developed from now onwards. He could stifle her and leave her to all the elements, or he could protect and nurture her to enable her to become a beautiful flower. He said that it was within the power of the groom to bring out the full potential of that flower if he cultivated and cherished it.

I was really touched, because I could see that the marriage partnership meant that you didn't have to battle through life with all its difficulties on your own, you could help each other and do it together.

Of course, not every woman is the same. Sometimes no amount of love, tenderness and consideration can sort out a bad seed. The bible gives accounts of women who belittled their husbands, brought down their families and corrupted countries. Queen Vashti, a classic example, was dethroned and divorced by her admiring husband because, as king, he could not tolerate her public scorn and ridicule. God does not approve of divorce. Jesus said it was only allowed by God because of the hardness of men's hearts. Yet God Himself divorced Israel for their constant spiritual adultery.

If a man has a wife who is rebellious, hard-hearted, stubborn, and refuses to work alongside him, he will need to seek God how to handle this

situation. *"Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel ..."* (Revelation 2:20). This type of woman, although unwelcome, was permitted to remain in the church, but it made God very angry. So, what is this type of woman doing in your home?

So men! Husbands! Help your wives. You have been placed in a position of authority in your home and there are things you can do which will help and encourage your wife to be someone you can be proud of. Remember, *"A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband"* (Proverbs 12:4).

In the following chapters of this book I propose to examine some of the virtues a woman generally looks for in her man. I am sure you will find that adopting these qualities will benefit you in nurturing the precious bud God has given to you, which in turn will enrich your marriage and work towards bringing about the mutual relationship you both desire.

# 5

## *Protection*

Maurice and I were married in the front room of our house on 18th April, 1989 and the very next day we went to the Registry Office in the centre of Manchester to go through a legal ceremony and get our marriage licence. Once the formalities were over we were taken that very day to the airport and flew out to America, as God had told us to go to New York. This was not a honeymoon. Quite the contrary. God had, for several months, given us vision after vision, confirmation after confirmation, that He wanted us to visit this city, yet we didn't know why. When we had shared our intentions with friends they had very kindly given us 'words from the Lord' that we would meet 'an angel on the plane or in the airport who would tell us where to go and what to do'. Unfortunately, after we had been sitting in the airport for a few hours, we realised that these well-meaning friends had spoken out of their own imaginations because we were completely alone and hadn't a clue what we were supposed to do.

As we had landed in the city without anywhere to stay, and no person to contact, Maurice looked around the airport to see if there were any advertisements for hotels, hostels, anything. We

saw by the telephone kiosks various cards pinned up on the boards so we looked through them. As they were free telephone numbers he phoned a couple to see how much they charged for rooms, and was mortified to find that the money we had brought with us would be used up after 2 nights board if God didn't do something – fast!

Maurice was forced to take up residence for the first night in one of these hotels and prayed frantically that God would direct us somewhere else the next day. He had been saddled with a new wife (me!) and sent to New York on a mission without any financial backing and he was sweating wondering how we were going to last out here for the next fortnight.

I didn't know Maurice was going through all this turmoil. I had just got married. You have no idea how I felt. Ever since I was 15 years old I had taken care of myself. I had earned my own living, rented my own apartment, paid my own bills, bought my own furniture, but now ... suddenly, after saying some words and accepting a ring ... I felt totally free of responsibility. I was now Maurice's concern, for he was my husband. Even though Maurice tried to explain the seriousness of the situation we were in, that we might have to sleep in the subway where all kinds of desperate people lurked, it didn't worry me in the slightest. I felt totally safe and secure because I was Maurice's responsibility now and I expected him to look after me.

Men have no idea what it is like for a woman

to feel that she belongs, to be owned, covered, protected. And that is exactly how she should feel – at all times, whether she is married or single.

According to the Bible, God intended that a virgin (the biblical term for an unmarried woman) would stay in her parents home under the covering of her father until the day she was married, and then she would swap her father's covering for that of her husband. The woman was never expected to be independent. She wasn't made for that purpose. God made the woman specifically so that she could belong to a man and enrich his life – to be "*a help meet (suitable) for him*", so that he could develop and together they could reach their full potential in God. Her role in society was to serve her husband and bear and bring up his children – to stay at home and keep house and by her attitude and lifestyle bring honour to her husband. Proverbs 31:10-31 gives a wonderful description of a virtuous woman. But sadly, although Solomon had 300 wives and 700 concubines, he claimed he was not able to find one virtuous woman among them! Well, you can't say he didn't try!

A couple of months after our return from New York – and yes, God did take care of us, and we were totally unharmed – we went on our honeymoon to Corfu. We were both completely happy. We had always been the best of friends but now there was an added dimension to our relationship which brought us so close in body, mind and spirit. We knew that God had blessed us both by giving us the right partner in each other. For me, personally, I

never once felt that I was taking a risk with Maurice, I knew him so well that I didn't need to find anything out about him, there was no real adjustment period, other than that now my bedroom was no longer completely mine, it was half his as well.

I had envisaged that the sight of my wedding ring would command respect, and men who had entertained ideas about me would now keep their distance, respecting the fact that I was a married woman and belonged to someone else. But even on my honeymoon I realized that wasn't the case.

Maurice wanted to try his hand at water-skiing, so I sat in the speed boat with the instructor as Maurice was pulled behind. Maurice had never done this activity before and the ski instructor was bent on making an impression on me by showing how incapable Maurice was as a sportsman. He did his best to make Maurice fall off the skis and managed to do it countless times during his trip up and down the sea front. I sat there clicking away with my camera when he was up, and when he was down, and every time the instructor caught my eye he would make embarrassing suggestions to me. I flashed my wedding ring, but that didn't matter one bit!

Eventually, on Maurice's final turn round the sea front he managed to stay upright for so long that when the speed boat was brought to the shore Maurice skied onto the sand. Apparently, everyone on the beach had been watching Maurice's efforts out there on the water and had found it immensely entertaining. As he came gliding on top of the water

to land upright on his skis on the beach for the one and only time of his entire session, the whole beach exploded into spontaneous applause (much to the chagrin of the instructor), and warmed us so much that it made even this potentially dangerous episode turn out to be fun. But it showed me how blatant men can be if they want to attract a woman's attention, and how vulnerable and in need of protection women are.

I remember another occasion when I went back to work shortly after I was married. I was with a temporary employment agency because I didn't want permanent work, and they sent me to help out in an administration office at Manchester University. Everyone notices the new person, and you have to accept that you're going to be stared at. But I had imagined that when you were married and wore a ring that people – men – would respect that and not put any pressure on you. But I was wrong. I had only been there a couple of days when one of the lecturers asked me out for a lunchtime drink. I said thank you, but no as I was married, to which he replied that that was no problem, as he was married too! During the following weeks, more and more pressure was applied to me until I left for other employment.

In Numbers 30 there is a clear distinction made between men and women concerning any vow they make to God. As far as the man is concerned, if he makes a vow to God then he was expected to fulfil that vow and under no circumstances was he allowed to break his promise. But it was totally

different for a woman. If she was single and made a vow to God whilst living in her father's house, and he heard it and disallowed her, then God said she was not bound by the vow, that He would forgive her and she would be free of her promise. The same with a married woman – if her husband refused to allow her to keep her vow then she too would be forgiven and freed from it.

Here again is a case of women being under the protection of men. Because of their emotional and spiritual vulnerability (I say 'spiritual' because Eve, not Adam, fell for the serpent's deception), God has made it that they are not held responsible for their actions, whereas the husband or father is. Just as parents take responsibility for what their children do under a certain age, so it is with women. Men are responsible for their wives.

# 6

## Patience

*"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."* (1 Peter 3:7)

It states quite clearly in this verse of scripture that women are the weaker vessel. I know many women would dispute this statement, but they are being defensive and over-sensitive.

Men and women are built differently and you don't have to be an intellectual to know that men are the physically stronger species. Although Maurice is shorter in stature than I, and of average build, he is tremendously strong. He can lift and carry objects I can't even budge. I find also that men and women think differently. Not in every case, I know, but the majority of the time a man thinks logically, whereas a woman thinks emotionally. But the major difference between us is that every month we women have a menstrual cycle which affects our whole body. Some women suffer more severely than others, but every one of us are affected in some way, and it is evidenced in our behaviour whether we like it or not. I remember during my school days some girls

actually fainted with pain at this time and had to be sent home. It is a definite problem which each of us, individually, have to learn to cope with so that others don't suffer. It is in this area mainly where a man needs to exercise patience with his wife.

Although I keep a track of where I am on the calendar, Maurice is usually the first one to notice whether I'm due for my periodic cycle as my attitude can change quite dramatically. Don't think you can pin a woman down. Her moods can swing from one extreme to the other at the drop of a hat and she will have no reason for why she is acting as she does. I get niggled over insignificant things, become irrational and do unreasonable things. Hormones are flying around in my body and send confused signals throughout my whole system. It is a known medical fact that around this time of the month women are more prone to have accidents, our reactions are slow and we make stupid assessments ... our bodies don't co-operate with our minds!

It is at these times in particular when I get quite nervous about picking the children up from school in the car. On occasion I have even shared my fears with Maurice in the hope that he will offer to do this for me, but he normally says, "Don't worry, I'll pray for you!" Oh well, at least I warn him. The problem is that when I do have a bump in the car (as I did the other week) it is no consolation to say to him, "I told you so!" Even though the children are thrilled at the excitement of having been 'involved in a car crash', and thankfully were totally unharmed, it still leaves you with a very sick, sinking feeling in

the pit of your stomach, knowing that even though you have been covered by the compulsory insurance for this eventuality, the Insurance Company will make you pay for what they fork out over the next 4 years because you have now lost your hard earned 'No Claims Bonus'!

Men, I must warn you that when we fall pregnant we are even worse and need you to exercise even more patience. The little life growing within us takes over. Again, not all women have the same symptoms. Some are extremely well throughout the whole of their pregnancies, whilst others are continuously sick. And the same woman can experience different symptoms with each of her pregnancies.

I can remember enjoying thoroughly my pregnancy with my first child, Nathan. Every kick and turn inside my body was a sheer delight. I was sick initially, but soon 'bloomed' and felt very well in myself. It was a wonderful experience. I was 39 years old and grateful to be even having a baby. Nathan was breech throughout the whole pregnancy and never turned the right way up, even though on two occasions a doctor and a consultant had a go at turning him. I was 12 hours in labour and had to be whisked off for an emergency Caesarean operation as he got stuck in the birth canal and was in trouble.

After the operation (which was in fact major surgery) I was on my back for a few weeks until my wound had healed. Maurice had a hard time as he was pushed to one side to make room for this little

man who was demanding my undivided attention. Meals were late and housework neglected as I wasn't quite feeling 'myself'. Really distraught at what I had been through, and having awful nightmares about the operation, I just hoped and prayed I would have no more children.

Strange how this feeling disappears! You would imagine that no woman would ever want to go through all that again, but some maternal instinct inside me wanted another baby so that Nathan wouldn't be brought up as an only child. I had a miscarriage when Nathan was 2 years old and begged God to be kind before it was too late, as time was running out for me. God was good and opened my womb, but this pregnancy was very hard.

Izaak, fortunately, was the right way up. I had two false alarms with the contractions on two consecutive nights and had been sent home each time from the hospital. So consequently, when on the third night it was the real thing, I was completely exhausted and needed a Ventouse delivery, which meant they used instruments to help suck the child from me when I ran out of 'push' after my 7 hours of labour. I was torn and sore and thought, "that's it, no more children!"

Three years later, I was pregnant again. This was the worst, and I endured it from start to finish. I was not even certain I would have a child at the end of this pregnancy because God hadn't given me any reassurances. I was depressed and low, crying at anything and nothing – trying my best to be a consistent mother to the children, who didn't

understand what I was going through, and finding my lot in life very difficult indeed. I dreaded the birth, as up until this child I hadn't had a natural delivery and wondered what was awaiting me. But, glory to God, my labour lasted half an hour and Tamar's little head appeared before the midwife even had time to put her plastic gloves on. I was absolutely delighted. The first entirely natural delivery I had experienced, and it took all my fear away for future pregnancies. But I think this experience is most unusual and I believe God was being very merciful to me in allowing me this virtually pain-free delivery.

Men find it particularly difficult when their wives are pregnant. For one thing, there is a great reduction in intimacy, and the woman seems to find everything such an effort and is constantly tired. But she is no longer in control of her own body. She has to hump this lump around everywhere she goes and has no relief until it is expelled from her body.

There were times I thought my stomach would explode – the lump got so big! And you wouldn't believe the difficulty we have putting our panties or tights on, getting in and out of chairs, and generally getting around. I was constantly turning to the side to get through narrow gaps, completely forgetting that my sideways was now much wider than my frontways, as the contours of my body were swelling so quickly ... every day!

It wasn't only pregnancy that caused a problem. I found nursing my child also put a barrier between us, and my husband needed to be really understanding and patient. I didn't feel attractive or feminine

during this period, I just seemed to function as a milk machine which my baby had rights over instead of my husband. My breasts were hard, packed tight with milk and ever so sore, and I felt this, too, put a strain on our relationship.

I have heard it said many times that if men were the ones to bear children, then the world would have ceased to exist long ago. That is indeed a great possibility! But this saying could have been true of women also, if God hadn't cursed her with a multiple curse ... Genesis 3:16 says, "*Unto the woman [God] said, (1) 'I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; (2) in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; (3) and thy desire shall be to thy husband, (4) and he shall rule over thee'*".

If God had left the curse at ... "*I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception and in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children*", I'm sure that mankind would not be multiplying at the rate it is today. But God cursed Eve in such a way that it almost made her a glutton for punishment. He said, "*Thy desire shall be to thy husband*", which in fact made Adam irresistible to poor Eve, even though she knew the physical downside of pregnancy after sharing an intimate relationship with him.

We try to find ways round it: pills to relieve menstrual pain; pills or condoms to prevent pregnancies; abortions to relieve us of unwanted births; hormone replacement treatments for those going through the menopause: but all these have side effects as they are a way to get around the curse God placed upon women.

I suppose, deep down, many men secretly hope for their woman to fuss, pamper and mother them when they marry her. Fat chance! ... She wants a daddy! I know it's unreasonable, but underneath she's very vulnerable and still wants to feel secure in the fact that someone understands and loves her no matter how she behaves.

Dear husbands, I know your dearly beloved will play on the fact that she is experiencing 'woman problems' and use it as an excuse to get what she wants, but try to be patient. The fact is you don't really know how much pain she is suffering. So make allowances for a day or two and give her some TLC (tender loving care) to let her know you still see her as a woman rather than just 'the wife'!

# 7

## Love

*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

*So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.*

*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” (Ephesians 6:25-33)*

What a beautiful passage of scripture. This should make every woman feel special. The husband is being given explicit instructions to love and care for his wife as he cares for himself, indeed as Christ cares for His church. This is the passage the minister

in Scotland spoke around when he told the groom that he had been given a bud to nurture and bring to maturity.

I have really benefited from my relationship with Maurice. Sometimes, when he and I have been into prisons to minister, he has told the men that we have very different backgrounds. He tells them, “One of us came from a rough, violent, dysfunctional environment, and the other one had a completely different start in life.” The men automatically think that he is the one with the rough upbringing and are stunned to find out that it was me. On numerous occasions the men have looked right into my face and said in disbelief that I bear no scars from my past – whereas they do, and the scars are very obvious.

I left home at the age of 16 years and came under the Pastor’s influence. I was constantly round at his house, not only to do his secretarial work, but also because he had two daughters around my age who had befriended me. Maurice was already married, so he lived away from home, but because he led the music group and took part in convening the church services, he had a great deal of input into my life and we became good friends.

You could not imagine what my attitude was like years ago. Indeed, I can’t believe it myself sometimes. But I know that I hated anything to do with authority. I had left school, home, and was now being paid what I was due for working. If anyone tried to lord it over me I told them in no uncertain

terms what to do and where to go. I was arrogant and proud and when I was persecuted by bosses for my attitude, I defended myself by saying this was the result of being a Christian.

I don’t know why the Barratts were there for me because their lifestyle and family relationships were completely different to mine. If they had a disagreement they would sit down and talk it through rationally and come to some sensible conclusion. They worked together for the good of the family. They were so ... unbelievable! My own experience had been so different and I would often quietly sit amongst them, waiting for them to forget I was there so they would act ‘normal’, and not put on an act for my benefit. But this was them – they really were being ‘normal’.

I remember during one group rehearsal when things weren’t going well and I was being corrected about something. Being the only female amongst 4 or 5 males I felt humiliated and shown up. I was so infuriated that, after I’d said some choice things, I ran out of the church and headed home. Nobody was going to speak to me like that, especially someone who wasn’t my boss. It was late at night but I managed to catch a bus.

As I disembarked at my destination and began to walk towards my apartment, I could see Maurice’s outline ahead of me. Immediately I panicked, turned tail and ran as fast as I could in the opposite direction. He ran after me and I was terrified. I had said some awful things, I had stormed out of the church in a fit of temper before the rehearsal

had ended, and here he was – waiting to ‘sort me out’. To make matters worse, Maurice tripped over something on the pavement and went sprawling across the floor. I nearly freaked out with fear. What would he do now, especially as I had caused him to embarrass and maybe hurt himself? I ran into a front garden and cowered behind a large rose bush hoping that Maurice hadn’t seen where I had gone. But he had, and he followed me. As he bent over me I cried out, “Don’t hit me, don’t hit me!” and covered my head with my arms.

Maurice was holding back tears as he asked in a choked voice, “What have your family done to you?” He held me as I sobbed. I was so frightened, yet so relieved he hadn’t battered me. He didn’t shout at me, tell me off or incriminate me, he just soothed and coaxed me, speaking very softly and gently until I had calmed down and regained a little confidence. People who cause problems, have problems. And, oh boy, I had massive problems. But the tenderness, love and patience which Maurice has exercised towards me over the years has paid off with dividends, so that now people think it’s him who’s had the family problems and not me!

Love shows itself in many forms, and Maurice has not always been gentle with me. There was one occasion, before we were married, which is etched indelibly on my memory. I was in my apartment preparing to go out as I had made arrangements to meet somebody. Maurice arrived at my door and wanted to talk with me. I knew he would definitely not approve of what I had proposed to do (neither

would any other Christian for that matter!) so I didn’t say a word about where I was going or who I would be with, and just carried on getting ready to go out whilst he talked with me. I became anxious as the minutes ticked away and did my best to get rid of him. But he wouldn’t go. Something was disturbing his spirit and he knew inside himself that it was related to what I was about to do.

In the end I got very blunt and told him to get out. But he wouldn’t and even stood in front of the door to block my exit. I was trapped and something really evil rose up inside me. I became hysterical, ranting and raving, shouting and screaming, and all the time an inner voice was telling me to just give in to what I was feeling. I knew it was the devil talking to me, and I could feel myself relaxing and giving way to his voice. “Just give way to what you feel”, the voice said, and I knew that if I did I would be giving permission of my own free will, to allow Satan to take control of my life ... and I could actually feel myself slipping into it.

Suddenly, I felt an almighty slap across my face. Maurice had actually hit me – really hard! The slap shocked me back to my senses and the reality of what had almost happened astounded me. I was stunned. I stared at Maurice and looking right into his eyes said, “Thank you,” – and now it was his turn to be shocked as I told him what I’d just experienced. I had almost given the devil a legal right into my life, and who knows where that would have led. Thank God, Maurice loved and cared for me enough to physically force me back to sanity.

This is a hard lesson to learn, but I've found that love does what is best for a person, not necessarily what the person likes.

I well remember an incident when Maurice and I had been married only a couple of months. I was used to running my own life and doing anything I wanted, as I had lived alone for a number of years. But suddenly, Maurice wanted to know where I was all the time. It seemed ridiculous. What was he expecting me to be up to? I knew I wasn't to be trusted, but I hadn't wanted him to go this far! This was possessiveness! He worked from home, which made matters worse, for I felt he was always spying on me. And now he expected me to go running upstairs to his office every time I needed to nip out of the house just so that he knew where I was. Obviously, I rebelled against this, it made me feel claustrophobic! At 37 years of age I went out without telling him, and the next time he saw me he said he wanted me in his office – with an apology! Man, that was more than I could handle. God had got me into this fix – He was the one who told me to get married. But I just couldn't cope. I sat down at my kitchen table and pondered what I would do. Is this really what I wanted for the next 50 years – someone breathing down my neck all the time, demanding that I be there at his every beck and call – wanting to know my every movement!?

It was then I realised I wasn't cut out for this at all, and so I wrote a letter to the effect that I was really sorry for the way things had turned out, but I now knew that marriage wasn't for me. I loved

him very dearly and respected him tremendously, but I'm afraid I just couldn't fit into his confines of married life. I was leaving ...

This wasn't an empty threat. I was not bluffing. I really meant what I wrote and had worked out in my mind what I would do. I could easily get a temporary job with the bureau again and find somewhere to live. It was just a shame that this would mean two failed marriages for Maurice instead of one and I really did regret doing this to him. I took the letter upstairs to his office, gave it to him and without saying a word came back down again.

It didn't take him long to read the letter and he flew downstairs. He was grinning from ear to ear – which I thought rather strange. He flung his arms around me and said he was sorry – which again I thought rather strange. He then said he realised he was putting me under an unnecessary burden and would wait until I'd had time to adjust. “And by the way, I've been thinking about things and have decided to give you your own car!” I could have fainted ... what did he say? True to his word he gave me a car, and the keys, and with these came the sense of freedom which my heart craved. But the funny thing was that this made me want to be a better wife. The more confidence he placed in me, the more I responded and complied with his wishes.

Over these past few years, since Maurice has been preaching from the Sermon on the Mount, he has tried to adopt a more godly attitude towards myself and the children. At one time he believed

it was right to be a strict disciplinarian, but now he has come to the conclusion that he has never been treated in that way by God. Like a tender father, God has given Maurice numerous chances to change. When Maurice's attitude has been humble, God has been full of love and mercy, but if ever he became arrogant and defensive God would deal very swiftly and heavily with him, for this is rebellion. And rebellion, in God's eyes, is as the sin of witchcraft (See 1 Samuel 15:23).

I didn't know how to behave in a family environment, but Maurice has shown me another side to it, and over the years his attitudes and qualities have rubbed off on me. It has required a great amount of time and effort from him, but he has been greatly rewarded in seeing me change. I know I've not been the easiest person in the world to handle (understatement!) and it hasn't been easy for him, but I'll be eternally grateful that Maurice loved me enough to adapt in many areas to become a better man and husband.

# 8

## *Tenderness*

There are many ways to express this word ‘tenderness’ ... not rough or hard; easily touched or entreated; solicitous; considerate; loving; affectionate; forgiving; not listening to a person’s heated words but hearing the cry of their heart. When a new born baby cries keeping you awake night after night, you don’t yell and tell it to shut up. No, you would pick the baby up with tenderness for fear of hurting it, knowing that it has not yet learned to communicate and this is the only way it can let you know it has a need. Sometimes, when you are so passionate about someone, you want to hold them so tight, but for fear of harming them you have to consider their fragility and treat them with kid gloves. This is the way God wants husbands to handle their wives. They could so easily be heavy-handed and physically force them into submission, but Christ’s way is to handle His church with care, as He Himself would wish to be treated. This is the way God treated Job’s wife, when after all the disasters of the animals being destroyed, her children killed and now her husband afflicted, she told Job to give in, to just “curse God and die!” But God didn’t regard her impulsive words, He could see in the depths of her heart the deep anguish she

was in, and knew that what she said was motivated by the desire to see her dear husband out of his awful pain. Job was doubly blessed by God after his trial, but Mrs. Job was there alongside him in it all. God opened her womb and it was to her that Job had his second family. No, God didn't cast her aside for unwise words; He forgave, blessed and elevated her.

My husband often says, "you are in control of your own emotions." When he first started saying this I used to get really ruffled. On the occasions when I said things like, "The children did this and they made me really angry", or, "You didn't do that and you made me really frustrated", he would come out with this saying and it would infuriate me. "No, Joanna, you allowed yourself to get angry. You allowed yourself to get frustrated. You choose how to react to given situations. When Jesus was being crucified He said 'Father, forgive them they don't know what they are doing'. No, you are in control of your emotions, nobody else." Sometimes there is nothing worse than having a godly husband! You can't give vent to your feelings and indulge your anger or frustration because he has challenged and convicted you, and you know he's right! But then, he has to live by the same rule and it has certainly made things run more smoothly in our household.

Because of my upbringing, and my incapability of being able to say the right thing at the right time, I know there have been occasions during our marriage when I have almost driven Maurice insane.

Colossians 3:19 says, "*Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*" Ephesians 4:26-27 says, "*Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil*", and verse 32, "*Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*" All these scriptures are saying the same thing – that you shouldn't let anger and lack of forgiveness get the better of you.

Maurice and I have different dispositions. He used to be extremely patient and it would take him a long time to come out with how he really felt when angered. I, on the other hand would blow a fuse even before the electricity had been switched on. I wanted to communicate they would either talk through their daughter, or pass notes to each other. What caused this? Probably something very insignificant, to which they both reacted badly, and pride stopped either of them from making up immediately. After sleeping on their problem they were probably waiting for the other person to make the first move, and when it didn't come pride continued to prevent them forgetting their hurt. As neither of them made the first move, their lack of forgiveness carried on for the next 20 years or more. Even though to all outward appearance they were married, in actual fact they were divorced already in God's eyes, and had condemned themselves to a living hell.

Staying together and working difficult situations through has altered us in many ways. For one thing Maurice is not quite so patient any more, he has come more my way. But then neither am I so volatile, God has managed somehow to calm my spirit so that I'm not living at 'high doh' all the time. He doesn't chase after me so much now, but then I don't hold grudges and go into moods. So we have met somewhere in the middle and instead of our characters being conflicting, they are now much more complementary.

Is being tender-hearted really worth the effort? It certainly is.

# 9

## *Attention and consideration*

*"Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.*

*Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.*

*The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.*

*Defraud ye not one another, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency." (1 Corinthians 7:2-5) "But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife." (1 Corinthians 7:3*

The romantic notion of marriage is that two people could become one and just live together happily ever after. But there are so many things

that get in the way of this. Going out to work is one of the problems. Men, make sure you don't let your wife leave the house without making up after an argument. Someone is sure to notice that she is having a difficult time and will try to console her. Her colleagues are being fed with sexual propaganda, from posters and newspapers to television and radio, all day long, so don't expect worldly people to be any different from what they are. I know what it is like to work in the world, and had my fair share of desirable temptations. And to a worldly man, a married woman represents stolen fruit which tastes so much better as it smacks of excitement.

I think that one of the ways God has blessed and protected women is by allowing them to bear children and bring them up in the safety of their own homes. I don't believe it was ever God's intention for women to farm their young out to crèches and nurseries whilst they went back to pursue a career. The very curse that God placed upon Eve was actually for her ultimate benefit. I know the Bible doesn't actually say that she was 'cursed' but I really can't find a better word to describe the suffering she now experiences because of God's punishment. God knew Eve was vulnerable, Satan had proved that, and He cursed her to protect her. He said her desire would be towards her husband and that the man would from now on rule over her. Many women will disagree with me concerning the man having rule over the woman, but this is what I read in the Bible.

I remember what it was like when I was a child and my own mother went back to work. She put me

with a neighbour who was supposed to be her best friend, but this woman treated me appallingly and would lock me in a bedroom, with her big black dog standing guard on the other side of the door so that I didn't get out. I would open the window and cry out to anyone who was listening to help me, but I don't remember anyone coming.

Another difficulty to overcome is the very fact that your union has brought little babies on the scene. Instead of bringing Maurice and I together, this actually separated us for quite a period. The husband in any partnership wants, and will always want, a lover. But who does the wife give her attention to? When she has children her physical body is literally torn apart and the little baby that issues from her womb makes unbelievable demands. If she is a bad mother she will ignore the child and do her own thing (as sadly some mothers do), but if her God-given maternal instincts are allowed to function, she will find herself totally committed to her child.

Because I nursed my babies, I was prepared to feed on demand, which meant that I was up 3 or 4 times each night for up to an hour at a time as I fed, winded, sorted out colic, changed nappies and mopped up sick, whilst Maurice never stirred from his deep slumber. When the children were sick it was always me that was on call whilst Maurice slept. Everything went on as normal during the day like shopping, cleaning and cooking, but then there was also the added duties of the babies.

Absolutely shattered after a full day and full night, Maurice would come home from preaching engagements expecting to have some quality time with me. From somewhere in my past I had heard and adopted certain principles: a wife should never strike her husband, refuse him her body or refrain from making his meals, and I always did and still do believe that these are good principles for a wife to hold on to in her marriage. But I was so tired and acted like a zombie ... like a lump of meat collapsing into Maurice's embraces which left us both with an utter sense of dissatisfaction. I had unintentionally disappointed my man once again, as Maurice hated to think he'd used me, preferring to wait until I wanted him.

I nursed my first child, Nathan, for 12 months, which meant that my hormones were still in 'pregnancy mode' for all that time, and my emotions in constant turmoil. Nathan demanded so much of my time that I lost the ability to give Maurice the undivided attention he had always received from me. Being unable to carry through any serious discussion without my being distracted drove him crazy. His utter frustration drove him to look for companionship in Alex, who worked for him, and he shared the revelation he had received from God with Alex instead of me. Thank God Alex was a man and not a woman! But this only emphasised to me that he had no notion of what I was going through. I was starving for lack of spiritual nourishment, and if only he had persisted he could have at least fed me some of the morsels he was constantly dishing out to others at his meetings.

Things went from bad to worse. I had lost my freedom, I was now tied to my child, and Maurice began to take other people to the meetings with him instead of me. I lost my discipline and relationship with God which left me feeling utterly condemned. And then I had another child, which increased the problems.

I got more and more jealous of Maurice being so free whilst I was so bound. He still spent time with God every morning in his study without any distraction from the children. I wanted change. I thought it only right for us to take it in turns each day and let him look after the children whilst I regained my relationship with God. He tried to comply but it didn't work. My concentration level was down to zero, if I heard any crying I would immediately be distracted and wonder how he was coping. I couldn't hear God, I could only hear babies.

My depression worsened when I looked at myself in the mirror. I had become a frump with no modern, nice clothes to wear. I didn't get out to do any shopping as I was never alone without the children. Maurice would complain when I wore old clothes and shabby underwear. I'd have loved to update my wardrobe, and especially my underwear drawer as these items had always been very important to me ... but we were living by faith and Maurice never thought about taking me shopping and buying me some casual wear. He had bought me a couple of outfits to make me look nice when I sang in meetings, but these weren't practical for wearing around the

house when occupied with housework and babies. It would have really lifted my spirit if he had taken time off to encourage me in this area. It had been so long since I'd looked at clothes shops that I had lost all confidence, and didn't even know what to look for.

Another major hurdle to overcome was our lack of communication. We were both very sensitive about so many issues that it was almost impossible to talk. If ever I tried to share with Maurice how I was feeling he would immediately become defensive and think I was having a go at him. If Maurice didn't compliment me regarding what I was wearing, how my hair was or what I had cooked for his meal, I would immediately jump to the conclusion that he didn't like it, and then I would become defensive. It was a very tense period in our married lives, but it was good for me in the sense that it made me question what I really wanted out of life. Did I want to make a go of this marriage or did I want to walk out on it? Did I want to build a future with Maurice or was I now only concerned about the children? I decided I did want a happy marriage, and I wanted the children to know what it was like to have a mum and dad who were living together because they loved each other, and not just for the sake of the children, or because they wanted to keep up the appearance of being Christians.

Eventually I came to the conclusion that God had placed me in this situation to teach me something. The very fact that I was married meant that God no longer wanted me to be independent, He wanted me

to be dependent ... on Maurice. So I decided to give up the fight and stop trying to regain the freedom I had when I was childless, and allow Maurice to be the head of his family as God had intended him to be. I would come completely under Maurice's covering, even for my spiritual well-being and sanctification. After all, if the unbelieving wife can be sanctified by her believing husband (See 1 Cor. 7:14), then surely I could be!

This was a major breakthrough. The strife between us ceased. Maurice communed with God every day and grew rapidly in his spirituality which made him a much better, more understanding husband to me. At night he would snuggle up as close as my advanced pregnancy would allow to let me know that he truly loved me. And he proved his love by exercising patience and not putting any pressure on me during my time of hormonal imbalance, putting more energy into working for God so that he wouldn't give way to frustration. Physical contact has always been very important in our relationship, so he made sure that at every opportunity he would kiss me, hold my hand or give me a hug to reassure me of his love. Obviously, this made it much easier for me to respond and become more and more submissive. God must have been showing him how to handle me. I began to settle into my role as a wife and mum, and the strain of trying to be 'righteous' was taken away.

When Izaak (my second little boy) was 2 years old, Maurice arranged to take me away on holiday, just

the two of us. At first I kicked and screamed against this because, being a devoted and protective mother I didn't want to leave my children. But Maurice took control and put my mind at rest concerning every detail. We were on the plane to Corfu when he asked me why I wasn't wearing any sort of necklace, to which I replied almost laughingly, "All my jewellery was stolen years ago and I don't have a necklace to wear. Don't you remember?" "Yes", he said, "that's why I bought you this" – and he presented me with a rectangular gift wrapped box and told me to open it. Inside was a beautiful, flat, chunky linked, gold chain. I held up my hair whilst he fastened it and knew with a lovely feeling of warmth that my second honeymoon had just begun. There's nothing quite like a bit of romance. It works wonders whilst we are courting, why on earth stop when we are married? Maybe we don't think it's necessary any more, but it is. We laugh at the joke, "That's no lady, that's my wife!", because wives are oftentimes just regarded as the unpaid housekeeper. But if you want your wife to act like a lady, then you must treat her like one.

No matter how religious or godly you may think you are, there are times when talking about spiritual matters is a real passion-killer. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 7:33 that the married man has to "*care for the things of the world, how he may please his wife*". Be romantic and demonstrate practically that you love her. Talk's cheap, actions speak much louder than words. Take her out for an intimate dinner (without other people) occasionally and treat her as special. Give her your undivided attention.

Indulge her from time to time and buy her something nice, something she wants, not necessarily what you want. This will keep love alive and let her know you are not taking her for granted.

From that moment on the plane, my life took on a different turn. Even the birth of our little daughter, Tamar, shortly after this didn't rob us of our new understanding. I felt certain that what was happening to me with the children was for a limited period only and in time I would have opportunities to get right back into the ministry. I still took bookings to sing and made albums, but not on the scale I used to.

Tamar has been going to school for over a year now and I can feel my spiritual life growing again. I cherish my quiet time with the Lord whilst all the children are being educated by born-again Christians at a private Christian school where they go through an entirely Christian curriculum. I sometimes used to take my time with God for granted or just treat it as duty, but things have changed.

I must confess, though, that one of the major factors in Maurice and I getting through our difficulties was the fact that at some point we were able to talk about the things that were hurting us both most without putting up the old barriers and being over-sensitive. God must have helped us to get to this place. I remember sharing something with him that I had shared with him at least ten times before, but this time I felt as though he had not only heard me but understood me, and that

made all the difference. Even though maybe the circumstances were the same, just to know that he understood was of far greater importance than being able to do anything about it. I must have done the same with him, too, because suddenly I began to see things from his point of view and instead of fighting with him because I hardly saw him, I began to support him and send him away happy on his ministry engagements, knowing that we were both working towards the same end.

I'm convinced that one of the deadliest enemies in a marriage is getting to the place where you can't communicate with each other any more. There is no place more lonely than a foreign country where nobody can speak your language and you can't speak theirs. And that is how a marriage is when there is no more understanding. I remember reading "lack of understanding is sin" in the bible somewhere, and it hit me so forcibly that I have remembered that phrase ever since. But I must have seen it in another translation rather than the Authorised Version because I can't find it anywhere now.

If Maurice hadn't put the effort in to seek God whilst I was going through my trials, depression, call it what you will, I don't know how things would have ended up. Maurice and I are firm believers that if you put God first in your life, "seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness", then everything will fall into place because God will be preparing the way and preparing you at the same time.

# 10

## Authority

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) ... *Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well*" (1 Timothy 2:2-5,12).

*"For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that it should be published according to the language of every people"* (Esther 1:22).

You will never be able to handle authority in the church or at work if you can't take authority over your own spirit, wife and children. Families need ground rules and boundaries to give them security. Children are far happier when they know their limits. OK, they may push and push to see how far

they can go, but once they do know, it will give them a wonderful sense of security.

When I was a child I fought for freedom, as every child does. I wanted so much to be independent and do my own thing unhindered. I regularly got waylaid on the way home from school and mocked the kids who said they had to be home at a certain time or their mothers would worry about them. But as time went by it began to hurt that my parents apparently didn't care where I was or what I was up to.

There was one incident I remember when I was still at my junior school and had become friendly with some builders who were working in the area. One of them took a shine to me and would take me off for walks after school. We would visit a sweet shop where he would furnish me with goodies, then would carry me, with my legs wrapped around his waist through fields, kissing me every now and then. At the age of 10 I was convinced I was in love with this man who was around 40 years old. The only fear I had was of becoming pregnant. Being so young I had no understanding of the facts of life and thought that seeds were transmitted through the mouth into the stomach. As all pregnant women I had seen had very large stomachs, I couldn't imagine any other way for the seeds to get there.

I marvel to this day that no harm came to me, God was protecting me even then. The relationship died a sudden death when my mother saw him walking me home and her alarm bells rang. She ran down

the road after him shouting all kinds of abuse, and that was the last I saw of him.

When I did ask why she didn't worry about me not arriving home from school straight away, she said, in a very matter-of-fact way, that she knew God was looking after me, and if anything did happen then the police would inform her! She felt confident, as a Christian, in God, but I felt as though she neither loved nor cared for me. I needed those boundaries to give me a sense of security and feel protected. The problem was that my parents weren't consistent; their moods usually dictated the rules. If they were in a bad mood then I was not allowed to do the same things I was permitted to do when they were in a good mood. If they were mad at each other I would play one against the other to get what I wanted. What was encouraged as being cute as a child was regarded as downright cheek and impudence when I got a little older. I didn't really know where I was and so I did anything I wanted, then waited to see their reaction.

Maurice and I are very protective towards our children and will not allow them the freedom of the streets. Times have changed drastically and it is positively unsafe for children to play out on their own as they used to without constant supervision, for fear of some stranger walking off with them. We are also very discriminating where baby-sitters are concerned.

We give our children lots of rope in other areas, but clamp down on them very quickly when they become involved with lying, stealing and rebellion.

In all these instances they are brought before Maurice for proper discipline, unless they show immediate signs of repentance. Izaak recently came home from school with a correction slip which stated that he had refused to work on one of his subjects as he said he didn't like it, and had brought it with him to do at home. He was frightened to show me the paper, knowing that I would send him to his father. He was so worried about it that, although Izaak is the liveliest of the three children, he couldn't lift his head in the car and when I did raise his chin so I could see his face, his eyes were red-rimmed as he tried his best to hold back the tears.

"Are you scared that I will show dad the slip, Izaak?" "Yes!" He had recently been let off with a few of these correction slips as they had been for such minor things and the school had already punished him by giving him detention. But this was worse, this was rebellion, and he knew Maurice would be much more stern. I felt sorry for him, he was only 7 years old at the time, and I wondered what I should do. "Tell you what, Izaak. Do your homework and then do two extra pages to show your teacher you are sorry, and I won't show dad the slip. What do you say?" His little face lit up, and then dimmed slightly as he realised it meant doing a bit more work. But as he could see the sense in doing this rather than receiving the rod of correction from his father, he put his hand to the plough ... And didn't turn back. And his dad never did see the slip!

Wives, too, need to know their limits. I know

that in front of my children I must never show my disapproval of any decision Maurice makes, even if I think he has made the wrong choice. If I need to vocalise an objection about something he has planned to do or said, I have to do it when we are alone. I never speak in a derogatory way about Maurice to my children, or other people for that matter, I must back my husband up and get behind him, even when I don't particularly like what he is doing.

I was not brought up with these principles, and it took Maurice a long time to educate me and make me aware of what he expected from his wife and the mother of his children. My own mother and father didn't share these principles and consequently we all grew up without respect for each other, which ruined all our family relationships.

Sometimes I let the children help me to do things like baking, for instance. Tamar who is only 4 years old can stir the mixture; Izaak can crack (well, almost!) an egg or two into the mixture. They are helping and always know that I am in charge. They often make suggestions concerning how we decorate the cake and I listen to them. If what they suggest is a good idea then we go ahead and do it their way. If it is impractical then we do it the way I think best, because they are helping me. Eve was given to Adam so that she could be a help. She was not meant to run the show, or take the authority. That was Adam's role. Neither was she meant to just stand around, watching and admiring whilst Adam did everything on his own. Eve was there to be with

Adam and have a concern in whatever he did, to give a suggestion or advice, because that was her role as they 'dressed' the garden of Eden together.

Communication from husband to wife is vitally important, even if it's just to let her know that her help is not needed in a particular area. I am absolutely convinced that it is very necessary for husbands and wives to have a good understanding and be in agreement with the goals they want to achieve, otherwise they can never work together in unity. If the foundation is solid – meaning the husband and wife – then the building they put up has a good chance of standing firm. But if the husband and wife are not pulling together and are doing their own thing, living their own lives, and have no united goal in view, then the whole family unit will be undermined and destroyed. Children are a product of their environment, and family life shapes their future.

God was merciful to me in allowing me to come under another influence from the age of 16. I was removed from my family and spent all my free time with the Barratts, and saw something in that family that I would love to cultivate in my own. Maurice's sister, who is exactly the same age as myself, went to university and then lived in Germany for a year teaching English to German students. When she came back to England, instead of getting her own apartment and living an independent, free life, she took up residence again with her parents. I thought this very strange, but put it down to the fact that she had probably found it very difficult living alone.

Perhaps she wasn't mature enough as a person to be able to handle all the responsibilities, or she was just too soft. I verbalised my thoughts to her one day when the topic arose and she was amazed. "No, that's not the reason. I love my parents and enjoy living with them." You could have knocked me over with a feather. Surely she didn't mean what she was saying. But I knew she did, because the way she talked about her family was totally different to the way I talked about mine. I envied her closeness to them, they really did love each other.

How had this come about? Because Maurice's father ruled his household well. The children knew they were loved, all had principles and discipline instilled in them, and above all they saw a consistency between what their father, the Pastor, preached in the church and the way he lived at home. They are all still following God today, and two out of his four children are in full time ministry. You cannot fool children, they see hypocrisy standing out like a sore thumb. They don't listen to what you say, they watch what you do. So be told! If you want a godly household, then you had better start living a godly life and establishing godly principles in your home.

Of course, not every woman is the same. Sometimes no amount of love, tenderness and consideration can sort out a bad seed. The bible gives accounts of women who belittled their husbands, brought down their families and corrupted countries. Queen Vashti, a classic example, was dethroned and divorced by her husband because, as king, he could not tolerate her public scorn and rebellion.

In God's eyes the order is completely wrong if a wife is permitted to dominate and dictate. If she has a weak husband who cannot cope, then a godly woman should utilise her strength of character in helping him to become a strong man who can take responsibility. God does not approve of divorce. Jesus said it was only allowed by God because of the hardness of men's hearts. Yet God Himself divorced Israel for their persistent spiritual adultery (See Isaiah 50:1).

If you have a rebellious, manipulative, hard-hearted, stubborn wife who refuses to work alongside you, then you need to seek God how to handle her and/or the situation. *“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel....”* (Rev. 2:20). This type of woman, though unwelcome, was permitted to remain, and be an influence, in the church at Thyatira. But this toleration made God angry. It is amazing that so many of these particular types of women are tolerated year after year in our 'Christian' homes. I wonder what God really expects the man, whom He placed in authority, to do about it? One thing is for certain, in such situations something has to change.

# 11

## Integrity

We can read in Job that God actually boasted to Satan about the integrity of Job. It was obviously a characteristic He didn't come across every day and He was so pleased to see it that He was the one to bring it to Satan's attention ...

*“And the Lord said unto Satan, ‘Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst Me against him, to destroy him without cause” (Job 2:3).*

Paul recognised the value of integrity and encouraged Titus to educate the young men he was mentoring ...

*“Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you” (Titus 2:6-8).*

I sing a song my husband wrote and the words go like this ...

It isn't hard to talk about

the way God rules in your life  
It isn't hard to go to church  
To sing all those lovely hymns  
and praise your Lord  
But what do people see in you?  
What does your family see at home?  
Do they see Jesus living in you?  
Are you a light, shining bright on your own?  
And what do people see in me?  
I wonder if they see my Lord  
It's no use saying, "I love Jesus"  
If my life doesn't follow His word  
I'd better not tell the whole world  
About God's goodness, love and purity  
No, I'd better not say God rules in my life  
Unless they see Jesus in me ..."

If only we were perfect. Oh the heartache and pain we would save ourselves and others if only we would live in such a way that God could boast about us like He boasted about Job. Other words for integrity are: honesty, uprightness, candour, goodness, virtue, incorruptibility, principle, purity. If only we could be depended on to say what we mean, do what we say, and to be who we profess to be.

*"The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him"* (Proverbs 20:7).

We would do well to remember that others are observing us at all times. I remember having a coffee one time with Maurice. It was a self-service cafe where you were supposed to help yourself to

unlimited drinks after you had paid for your initial cup. I had a couple of decaffeinated coffees and thought the little sachets the coffee was put into were so handy that I put a couple of them into my handbag. I thought these would be very useful as I often go to people's houses and they are not stocked with decaff.

"What are you doing?" asked Maurice, and before I could answer, he told me, "Put them back. You are not stealing whilst you are with me!" Staring at him for a few seconds because he was so serious over something I thought to be very petty, I suddenly felt mortified, knowing he was right and that there were still areas where the criminal inside me needed dealing with. You would be amazed what children see you do and copy. At times, they can be very embarrassing. Whereas we would be discreet about doing certain things, they will be very bold as their conscience doesn't trouble them. For their sakes we must maintain our integrity and uprightness so that they can learn from us how to conduct themselves in a godly manner both in public and in private. For instance, if you break your promises, then don't blame them if they grow up to do the same thing. If you steal pencils, paper or time from work, that's what they will do. If you complain about those in authority at work or in the church, expect them to follow suit. If you tell lies to get out of difficult situations, borrow things and never return them, grumble when asked to do something, sulk when corrected, etc., etc. (the list is endless), it will come out in their attitudes. We have to *"guard diligently our hearts for out of them are the issues*

*of life*” (Proverbs 4:23).

As parents we have been given precious souls to nurture and present to God. Indeed, every husband has been given a spouse before whom he has to set an example if she is to work with him. Let her know that you can be relied on. If you promise to give your wife some time, then make it happen. You are the one who is in control of your actions, nobody else will take the rap for you. Cultivating an honest relationship between your wife and children is of the utmost importance and must not be belittled. A promise unfulfilled can cause such disappointment that it can develop into a root of deep hatred – even in the lives of so-called Christians. I know, because I have met them. Their marriage relationships have suffered for years because they lost their trust and couldn't forgive or forget. This is not right, of course, but don't give room for the devil to destroy what God has given you.

In this area, more than any other, I think many women feel let down. Not because their husbands intend to let them down, it's just that other things take priority in men's lives and they don't really take their wives seriously – after all the little ladies are (nearly) always there when their husbands get home, and men can usually give them some good reason for their neglect. But it does hurt, especially at first. Over a period of time most women, sadly, get to the place where it doesn't affect them anymore and they get on with their lives. Then whenever the husband does try to make an effort at pleasing her,

the wife will automatically expect him to fail and let her down yet again. But surely, this is not a good thing. At one time in our history Englishmen were proud of their integrity ... “An Englishman's word is his bond” was a way in which our countrymen were described. But this is no longer true. Indeed, we cannot even pass cheques over a counter without the shop assistant requesting our bankers' card to guarantee payment.

The following is a true story. A couple called for a drive-through meal from a MacDonald's Restaurant. They parked their car and opened the brown MacDonald's paper bag only to find that their meal was not there. They had been given the wrong bag. As it happened they had been given the bag containing that whole day's takings which were intended for the bank – a great deal of money! What should they do? They couldn't keep it.

Their consciences forced them to go back to the restaurant and explain what had happened. The manager was overwhelmed, to say the least, and extremely grateful that the bag had been returned and begged the couple to stay just a little longer, as their act of honesty and integrity was such a rare thing in this day and age he wanted it reporting in the newspapers. This immediately alarmed the man as he looked at the woman beside him. “I'm sorry, we can't do that. This is not my wife!” He didn't mind committing adultery, but he definitely couldn't steal!

We all have some form of integrity, but just how selective is it?

# 12

## Capability

*“Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work”*  
(Exodus 20:9).

*“Study to be quiet, do your own business, and work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing”* (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).

*“We behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you”* (2 Thessalonians 3:7-8).

“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the fail, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Timothy 4:8). There are many more scripture to back up the fact that a man, as far as God is concerned, is responsible for looking after his family by labouring with his own hands. The curse which God placed upon Adam when he ate of the fruit from the wrong tree, was for the same purpose as the curse upon Eve – to protect him. God was telling Adam that He was not prepared to continue being a ‘sugar daddy’. From now on Adam was expected to cultivate his own garden and eat the fruits of his own labour.

As the saying goes: “Idle hands make mischief”, so for Adam’s protection God ordained that he should keep himself busy.

This also is true for the women. In Paul’s first letter to Timothy he instructed him not to add to their number any widow if she was under the age of 60. He warned Timothy that when they had grown cold towards Christ they would remarry and *“...learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully”* (1 Timothy 5:13-14).

Maurice is not a brilliant intellect, neither has he had a great education. As far as I know he has no academic qualifications, but one of the qualities I most admire about him is his ability to try things. They say that necessity is the mother of invention, and perhaps this is the motivation behind everything Maurice has done.

Although his youthful dream was to be a millionaire, he never did seem to have any money of his own. But because he was so industrious, all his secret ambitions – even those he was unaware of himself – have seemed to literally materialise.

When he left school, Maurice took up an apprenticeship to become a draughtsman, but not long after this an opportunity arose at the church for him to be in charge of running a printing press

as a full time job. He jumped at the idea of working for himself, as in the back of his mind he saw this as a chance to work his way up in the world and become a wealthy businessman. Sadly, after only a few years, the printing press changed hands and he was out searching for a job. It was at this juncture that he was taken on by a second-hand car trader, who employed him as his manager.

Maurice's boss was a 'jack of all trades' and passed on much of his own expertise, which gave Maurice a good basis. He also passed on an old, dilapidated, Victorian house for Maurice to refurbish and run as part of his income. Maurice had hardly any money, so he had to learn from scratch how to rip out rotten floorboards and lead pipes and replace them. He would renovate a room, rent it out, and with the money that came in from the lodger would start on another room, until the whole house was totally refurbished. As he was in desperate need of money to feed and clothe his wife and two young children who lived in the house with him, his own living quarters were the very last to be updated. But Maurice learned many skills, and God brought people his way who were getting rid of old toilets, baths, sinks, beds – anything that he could utilise in the apartments – and he had to plumb them in, wire them in, bricklay and plaster, together with a thousand and one other things.

Maurice's aptitude for learning and his ability to apply himself has contrasted vividly with so many people I have associated with. I know a married couple who are old people now, in their 80's, and

only recently the City Corporation modernised the bathroom of their council house. The wife told me delightedly that they had at last put up, on the bathroom wall, the little mirrored cabinet she had bought 30 years earlier, which her husband had never fitted for her. It wasn't his house, so why should he do it? She was always the one who did the decorating too. When she was 8 months pregnant with her 5th child she stood on a table wallpapering the ceiling of their council house living room, with her husband directing her from his armchair. She was very industrious, cooking, baking, making clothes for her kids, and suits for herself and her husband, out of old clothes from jumble sales or remnants which she had purchased cheaply. But he seemed to be the opposite.

For some reason I have always regarded this man's attitude as the 'working class mentality'. It seems that people who don't own the possessions they have acquired don't know how to look after that which has been loaned or given, and they complain about everything. Nothing is ever good enough or done the right way. I know of another family living in council property who have cupboard doors hanging off their hinges for months, and complain about the length of the grass in their small garden, waiting for the men from the council to come and maintain them. Then they sit on their posteriors before the goggle box all day long watching the 'God Channel' because they are being looked after by 'Jehovah Giro'!

The cases I've mentioned are of people who

profess to be Christians, and this is not a good witness – indeed it does not show the character of Christ. Jesus had quite a bit to say about being busy: *“But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work”* (John 5:17). *“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work”* (John 9:4).

I have travelled around considerably during my years in the ministry and have noticed something very odd. I have been invited to a few homes where husbands have been really kind to their wives, bending over backwards to help with housework and looking after the children. Indeed in some instances even whilst Maurice and I have been guests, the wife has not surfaced until very late in the morning and the husband has busied himself making our lunch, looking after the children as well as clearing up the family mess. The wife has appeared unkempt in dressing gown, chatted to us over the kitchen table, and left the husband to his chores. At some point in the afternoon she has dressed herself whilst the husband both amused their kids and then set about preparing the evening meal. I watched on with amazement thinking ... *“Oh, for a man like that!”*

The thing that is so odd about this situation is that these women never seem to be satisfied. The more a husband does for his wife in the home, the more she appears to expect, and will even be ungrateful for what he has done. I see from this that if the man acts like a woman, then he shouldn't complain if his wife treats him like one. We all have our roles. Consideration on the rare occasions when your wife

is under pressure, is one thing. But behaviour like this on a regular basis is, from what I see in the bible, not what God intended. A man should be busy doing man's work.

Remember the story of the pounds in Luke 19:26, *“For I say unto you, that unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.”* We are being constantly watched and assessed during our earthly lives to see how we handle all the opportunities God puts our way. If we are too lazy to be bothered, then we should readily expect a greeting which includes the words *“slothful servant”* when we face Him. But if we are willing to work and make the most of our opportunities there is a chance that God will consider us worthy to be entrusted with true riches in His Kingdom.

Alex Robertson came to live with us at Barratt Ministries 19 years ago. Alex was a professional violinist and viola player, but under Maurice's supervision they built together a room in the cellar for Alex to occupy. Since that date they have revamped the whole house, knocked down walls and ceilings, added rooms, built office suites, a recording studio and a video editing suite, as well as making the furniture to go in them. They have also learned how to use the equipment they installed – computers, graphic design and desktop publishing programmes, video and audio recording equipment (to name but a few) – and can now produce on our very own premises audio cassettes, CDs, videos, tracts, newsletters, books, artwork for book covers

and much more. The quality of their products is so good that our videos have been requested for use on Digital Satellite television network.

Some husbands have no idea how proud their wife is when he shows her how capable he is. I know many men are frightened of their wives calling for their help every 5 minutes to do this, that and the other. But let me tell you something ... if your wife thought you would make a hotchpotch of it, she wouldn't ask you. She asks because she knows you are capable and will do a good job. So a wise man will accept his wife's 'implied compliments' and be there for her.

# 13

## *Stability*

Other words offered for 'stability' by the dictionary are: steadfastness, solidity, constancy, durability, firmness, permanence, soundness, strength. What are you aiming for as a married couple? What are your goals as a family? Has God put a call on your life? If so, what for, and are you working towards fulfilling that call? How firm are you in your convictions? Is your call strong enough to withstand testing?

Hebrews 11 is a wonderful passage reminding us of all the people in the bible who have been spoken to by God, and who walked and lived their lives in the faith that God would bring to pass all that He had said. Noah was told to build an ark and was given the specific dimensions by God. Although he had never seen a drop of rain in his life, and I suppose didn't even know what God meant when he warned him He was going to send rain and a flood on the earth, Noah set about the task of building, together with his three sons, as God had told him. They had no machinery or power tools, and were mocked daily by those who watched on.

How could Noah explain about rain and floods when he himself didn't even know what it was? But he continued building for 100 years and didn't give

up, reaping his reward in salvation when the heavens opened and God poured out the rain. Hebrews 11:6 says that *“without faith it is impossible to please God”* and that *“God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”*.

As the head of the home the husband or father is looked upon as the final authority and the one to set the standards. Those who are watching on count on the head to stand firm in his principles. Because he is a Christian he is expected to hold up certain standards and ideals which will encourage his family, and give them strength to get behind him. If he loses his faith in God and lets those standards slip, it shakes the whole foundation of the family, as each individual is tipped out of the boat and cast into a sea of confusion where each one has to fend for themselves and either survive or drown.

In our home we often sing a chorus:

I'm going on, I'm going on, I'm going on  
Towards the mark, towards my home  
So many lives depend on what I do  
Give me the strength, Oh Lord,  
I'm going on with you

Many years ago, when Maurice first moved into the house we are living in at present, the back garden was a jungle. Nobody had looked after it for years and there were brambles and graveyard weeds everywhere. His children could play hide and seek in them and be undetected for ages. He decided he would clear it up, and every morning before work

he would spend a couple of hours chopping them down and burning them.

Then he had another problem – all the old cars, beer bottles and other trash that had been left on the premises before he took over the property. What could he do with it all? He decided he would chop up the cars and other big items and bury them all under the ground at the bottom of the garden and do some sort of landscaping there. In the meantime he began to look for old bricks which had been left on disused building sites and brought them home.

The Polish man who owned the massive house next door, which had been converted into apartments, popped his head over the wall wondering what he was up to. Maurice told him and the man laughed. “You’ll never do it, the job is far too big. You’ll never do it!” He laughed all the way back into his house. He thought Maurice was either joking or crazy. He himself had spent thousands of pounds to get his ground levelled and covered with tarmac, and here was Maurice telling him he was going to do it all by himself with his little hacksaw, spade and wheelbarrow!

But Maurice carried on collecting bricks. Indeed we were both on the lookout all the time and would bring home van-loads of broken bricks which he intended to lay one at a time as he cleared the ground at the back of the house. It took years and thousands of bricks, but Maurice did it.

The Polish man could not believe he would stick at something for so long and said, “I thought you would never do it!”, and just stared in disbelief and amazement.

Ephesians 4 tells us that *“God gave us apostles; prophets; evangelists; pastors and teachers to perfect the saints for the works of the ministry and the edifying of the Body of Christ; until we all come in the unity of the faith unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine ...”* (Ephesians 4:13-14). We need to hear and understand a message clearly, receive our own revelation and conviction concerning it, and stick with it once we have accepted it. God cannot order the steps of someone who vacillates. If He knows that when you say something you will not waver from what you have purposed, then He can bring things across your path, because He knows you will either see them or trip over them on your journey. But He cannot put things in your way if you keep moving off the path.

I know so many Christians who are always jumping on the latest bandwagon, and nobody knows what they will believe next. If God has told you to do something today, He will not tell you to do something else tomorrow, for He is not the author of confusion. If this is your experience then you will have to decide whose voice you are hearing, because God doesn't play games with people. If He tells you to do something He will have been preparing you for a long time – perhaps years – beforehand, and you will know the truth deep down inside. If you have no such conviction, then you

cannot stand firm, and you must wait for a solid word from the Lord before making bold statements and commitments to anything. I remember years ago when the church I attended had a vision from God. It was for the whole church – children, youth and old people. The vision was to be able to look after every member in every age group. We had already completed part of the vision and had built a youth centre where the children and youth were catered for. But now the emphasis was on raising funds to build an old people's home, and every month we would take up an offering, called a 'Jericho March Offering' which would go towards this project.

The years have passed, and the 'Jericho March Offering' is still being taken up, but the vision has died, together with a lot of the old people. The people weren't told about the change in plan, the money just started somehow to be used for maintenance purposes. But what a let-down for those who had faithfully given, hoping one day to have lived on the premises and pass from there into the presence of the Lord. It's sad. But that's what happens when people vacillate and are not consistent. And those watching lose faith and respect.

My marriage is the biggest commitment I've ever taken on. I know that my children would be devastated if Maurice and I allowed it to fail. My children need to know that this is the foundation which God ordained for family life, that there should be commitment and stability, and that we should not give in to what modern society is doing all around us. There are attacks from everywhere

on family life today. Young children are being taught that there are other alternatives, they do not have to be heterosexual, they can choose for themselves. Young people are given free pills and condoms to promote promiscuity whilst others are receiving free abortions to prevent responsibility. The government supports this liberal lifestyle by providing homes and furnishings for one-parent families, and the television indoctrinates us by telling us this is what we want. WE DON'T! There is no joy or peace to be found by being conformed to the world and doing things their way. We have to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, and think with the thoughts of Christ.

We must learn to stand by our decisions. Is your marriage difficult? Have you tried to solve your difficulties? If you can't change your circumstances, change your attitude! But don't give in, the little eyes are watching and the little hearts will break if you do.

# Conclusion

So – what is a woman looking for from her man? I have mentioned a number of qualities which could tremendously benefit a marriage, but these are not the root of the issue. God is at the very root of everything

A good husband needs to have a real and personal relationship with God if he is going to be somebody to look up to in his home. God said of Abraham, *“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgement; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him”* (Genesis 18:19). Preachers have often pondered why God chose Abraham to be the father of the Jewish nation. God knew Abraham would ‘command his whole family’ (teach them to walk uprightly). Don’t ever leave the spiritual training of your children to their mother, no matter how good a job she does. Otherwise they will grow up thinking spiritual matters are only for women. It would be good if fathers put the children to bed in the evening, and read and prayed with them. When they are old enough to understand, begin reading or telling Bible stories. Throughout the day, as it is natural, tell them of our Heavenly Father. Together, examine nature as the wise creation of a magnificent God.

Check yourself for balance by asking the question, “Do my family view me as a stern and

severe disciplinarian or as a cheerful and wonderful companion and guide?” Your judgements and punishments should be lost in the many hours of happy communion. An important principle to remember is that the more time you spend doing things together, the fewer discipline problems you will have. A wife who adores her husband, and a child who adores his father, will want to please him in everything. A wife or child cannot rebel against their best friend.

Every couple quarrels passionately at some stage in their married life, and in the privacy of their own home this is something which flares up and simmers down without anyone else usually being involved or affected. When I was growing up there was continual and constant bickering in my home, which made me expert in the art of argument and sarcasm. My mind was sharp and I could find a suitable retort to anything anyone dared to say to me.

But I have found it very difficult in our marital home to give vent to my feelings as we have always shared the house with other people (at one stage 12 others in adjoining rooms) who could hear and give testimony to any ungodly attitudes I may have displayed.

My parents had a plaque hanging on their sitting room wall which said, “Christ is the head of this house, the unseen guest at every meal, the silent listener to every conversation.” If we took those words seriously and were constantly aware that God, as well as others, really did listen to everything

we said, we would speak far less. Although at times it has been a terrible frustration to know that all our ‘raised conversations’ were heard, it also helped me tremendously to look more closely at what I said, and the way in which I said it, and eliminated completely the desire to argue because I only displayed my own rebellion and irritability. Obviously, God arranged this circumstance for my sake so that I could become more Christlike, and it was very humbling.

I have often wondered where I would be now if I had married someone other than Maurice. The thing that has helped us the most is our single vision. No matter what problems we faced with our differences in character, we always knew what God had called us to, and that God had called us TOGETHER in the same vision.

I know of many marriages where husband and wife are involved in different ministries, and my observation is that these marriages simply do not work for complete unity. There is always an element of competition which should never arise in a marriage. Especially as when God created Eve for Adam, He specifically made her to be a help for him, not the other way round.

The thoughts I have offered in this book are not the outcome of my overcoming problems in a difficult marriage. Quite the opposite. God has been very gracious to me and given me a wonderful partner who desires with all his heart to live what he preaches. Maurice has been blessed with patience, and it has been tested to the limit living with me.

But I know that my relationship with Maurice has taught and enabled me to be a good wife. I could not have done it on my own.

I know it is commonly said that men are just little boys who have grown up, but I am convinced because of my own experience that women with seemingly tough exteriors are just vulnerable little girls inside, looking for someone to take control and relieve them of responsibility. Men, women need your help, so ...

Play the Man!