

To the Wife of the Grieving, Depressed, or Traumatized Man

by Bruce T. Forbes, 2007, 2013

In 2007 I wrote a series of articles for an on-line magazine about men and depression. They became the genesis of my book "[Men-and-Depression:-One-Man's-Journey](#)." Several therapists and other mental health professionals wrote and asked for permission to use those articles, and I granted them all permission. Most of them, however never posted the final article, the one addressing the wives of said men. Here is that final article.

Introduction

Men who have read this series of articles on Men and Depression – many of whom are the very men about whom these articles have been written – have asked that I address one specific group, and they have even given me some things they want me to say. My first thought was that I had addressed this group in the first article in the series, but these men say I need to focus in on one very special group: the beloved wives of the grieving, depressed, and traumatized men. So, dear Sisters, please refer to the first article in this series, and then come back and read what else these men want me to say especially to you.

One of the terrible things about the written word is that the reader cannot hear the tone of voice in which the writer is 'speaking'. Know this is 'spoken' in nothing but the spirit of gentleness and love, and your men are praying that you read it in that very same spirit. Know that this is not a whine session; it is a plea for help.

Who Is This Message From?

This is not a message from an abusive, hating man

– I would never agree to speak for them! This message is from that man who is trying his best to be a good husband, father, and Son of God. And the first thing that needs to be said, even before the article begins, is that this husband loves you and appreciates you. He knows he wouldn't make it through life without you. He hopes to someday be worthy of his loving wife.

Who Is This Message For?

The vast majority of the women in the church do not need to hear this message as they are already doing these things. But there are those who need to hear it, so I raise my voice in hopes that they do hear it.

The message of this article is specifically to the wife who is married to a faithful husband who is doing his best to follow the standards and guidance in marriage as established by the Lord and His prophets. There are things in this article that may or may not apply to those of you who do not have a righteous husband who is trying live the Gospel and follow the covenants he has made.

PART ONE: Some “Healthy Marriage” Basics

NOTE: This section is based on my religious experience as a Christian and as a Latter-day Saint. Discussion of men and women and the various gender roles are from that background. If you are from another religious background, your religion may have taught these things from a different viewpoint. I can only speak from my background and do not in any way mean to belittle another's background.

Cleaving to Each Other

Immediately upon God's creating of Man and Woman, Adam named his companion 'Woman', “. . . because she was taken out of Man.”¹ STRONG'S Concordance defines 'taken' as: 'to take', 'get', 'fetch', 'lay hold of', 'seize', 'receive', 'acquire', 'buy', 'bring'. Adam's flesh was given to give life to Eve – he 'bought' her life with the giving of his flesh; she acquired mortal life by the sacrifice of his flesh. The Lord then commanded -

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”²

In the Book of Genesis the Hebrew word 'dabaq' is used where the King James Version says 'cleave', and it is further defined by STRONG'S as: 'to cling', 'stick', 'stay close', 'cleave', 'keep close', 'stick to', 'stick with', 'follow closely', 'join to', 'over-take', 'catch'. The Greek word 'proskollao', used when the Savior quotes the Old Testament as recorded in Matthew and Mark, is defined as: 'to be joined'; 'to glue upon, glue to'; 'to join one's self to closely', 'cleave to', 'stick to'. In a good, healthy marriage the only thing a man truly wants to do is cleave unto his beloved wife. He has no desire to 'join himself to' or 'stick to' any other woman. He may still appreciate the beauty of the female form as one walks by, but his heart, mind, and devotion are firmly in the hands of his beloved companion.

Lest the human race think all this cleaving and 'sticking to' was commanded only unto the men,

¹ Genesis 2:23

² Genesis 2:24; see also Matthew 19:5, Mark 10:7

God also spoke to Eve and her daughters: “. . . thy desire shall be to thy husband . . .”³ There is nothing else in mortality the Lord has commanded a woman's desire towards as He has towards her husband. Your husband takes priority over all other earthly endeavors. As a woman you have a 'natural' desire towards your children and even towards yourself, but even this must be tempered while you enthrone your husband in his rightful place as set forth by Divine command – so that you will remain enthroned in your rightful place in your husband's eyes and heart.

Whether you are a man or a woman, your marriage companion and their health and well-being is more important than the children, sewing hobbies, or even genealogy. It is more important than golf, fishing, and car racing. It is more important than any calling the bishop can give you, because your marriage companion is the stewardship the Lord has given you.

One Command Spoken in two Different Ways

The startling thing about both of these 'clinging to' commands is that they are basically the same command; just worded differently. A man leaves his parents behind and cleaves to his wife. A woman leaves her parents behind and clings to her husband. Her desires are towards her husband; his desires are towards his wife.

This leaving behind of the parents means that your marriage must be built in a way that works for the two partners; it cannot be a carbon copy of how their parents built their marriage. Perhaps his mother did in fact do something better than her

³ Genesis 3:16

mother did; learn from it. Perhaps her father did know something better than his father; learn from it. You are building your marriage; not carrying on your parents' marriage. The defense of "that's how my mother/father did it" never overrides your companion's needs. Just make sure that the Gospel of Jesus Christ – including its divinely-appointed gender responsibilities - is the foundation upon which your marriage is built.

Susan was raised in an abusive home and knew nothing else. Knowing she was raised in such wrong conditions, she still clung to them like a life-line because they were all she knew; even to the point of refusing to believe that anything her husband could show her from his solid, gospel-centered childhood could be any better than what she knew. She took his trying to teach her what a Gospel-centered marriage could be to mean he was trying to force her to live his parents' marriage. She eventually lost her husband and her children as they chose the gospel over her abuse. Although she is just beginning to admit she could have learned from her husband, her abused/abusive mother's teachings that the man is supposed to cater to and obey his wife are still too strong to let her husband be her equal. (This was her mother's way to ensure that the multi-generational abuse ended.) Her husband, however, wanted to be at least an equal partner in marriage but was never able to be one while married to Susan.

Who Established the Gender Roles?

There are many gender roles that vary from one culture to another. But God did establish some basics that we ought not ignore! While men and women are certainly equal and equally loved in God's eyes, He meanwhile gave certain gifts and 'missions' to men and certain gifts and 'missions' to women. Simply put, to fight against God's gender roles is to fight against God.

Men and Women are equal in the sight of God. But within this equality God has equipped them

and assigned them different roles and purposes. They are a 'quorum'; a Latin word that denotes that they meet in council and do all things in harmony and by common consent. Section 121 of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants teaches how these two quorum members come to agreement on matters that need agreement:

“No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile - Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy; That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death. Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.”⁴

As Patriarchs and Matriarchs, this scripture applies to both members of the quorum we call 'a married couple'.

Where Much is Given Much is Required

“For of him unto whom much is given much is re-

⁴ Doctrine & Covenants 121:41-46

quired,” said the Lord to the modern church.⁵ Although the vast majority of scriptures that give marital instructions deal with how a man treats his wife, this does not leave the wife without instruction. The more a husband or wife expects from their partner, the more they must give. The more respect is required, the more respect must be given. Where more service is rendered by one partner, the receiving partner must turn around and give compensating levels of love, appreciation, and gratitude. Anything else allows selfishness and abuse to enter the relationship.

Scriptural Teachings of the Dual Responsibility in Marriage

The Apostle Paul has been sharply criticized by those who claim he wanted to place women beneath the men. Let us read some of his important teachings about marriage and discover just how much he loved women and taught the men to respect them, first from his epistle to the Corinthians:

“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.”⁶

Heavenly Father is not suggesting that husband and wife have a divine right to molest and abuse each others' bodies, as modern thinkers try to make from this passage. Let's read both of these verses as a single quote to better understand the whole picture.

First, God commands both husband and wife to show benevolence to each other. Webster's defines 'benevolence' as “the disposition to do good; good will; kindness; charitableness; the love of mankind, accompanied with a desire to promote

⁵ Doctrine & Covenants 82:3

⁶ 1 Corinthians 7:3-4

their happiness.” Notice that both husband and wife are commanded to do good, show good will, and be charitable towards each other while promoting each others' welfare. Second, if husband and wife are displaying benevolence towards each other, then certainly these verses do not suggest in any way that abuse or violence is divinely-sanctioned in marriage. What is sanctioned, however - and even commanded – is the giving of one's self, even the giving of your physical self, to build up, nurture, and comfort your husband or wife. This passage is telling both husband and wife that neither of them have the right to withhold even their body in aide and comfort and nourishment of their marriage partner. Your husband or wife has the right to come to you for comfort and find it, and you have the divine responsibility to meet their need.

Another passage by Paul that today's critic's hate is -

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.”⁷

According to STRONG'S, 'submit' in the New Testament is defined as "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden". Now, with the phrase 'giving in' I can hear many dear sisters screaming; especially those with a history of abuse. Before screaming, however, stop and define 'giving in' by the phrases that immediately follow it: cooperating; assuming responsibility; carrying a burden. I'd bet that's a much better definition of 'giving in' than that one you were just thinking!

Also remember that the woman is only commanded to follow a righteous husband.

It was certainly newsworthy to many of us

⁷ Ephesians 5:22-24

when the LDS Church stopped using the word 'obey' to describe the manner in which the wife follows her righteous husband - there were women who felt the Lord had liberated from their husband. But before the celebrations went too far I hope the celebrants paused to look up the definition of 'harken', which is the word the Church now uses in the place of 'obey'. As was noted in a General Conference address, and as defined in Webster's Dictionary, 'harken' means to 'listen and follow'. A wife who is striving to be a Daughter of God has been commanded to 'listen to' and 'follow' her righteous husband, even if we aren't using the 'obey' word.

Carefully note that Paul does not let the husband assume leadership in the home without his responsibilities being equally noted:

“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.”⁸

While a wife's love for her husband is patterned after the love the church shows to Christ, the love a husband shows his wife must be patterned after the love Jesus Christ shows for His Church – His followers. This leaves no room for abuse of any sort. This leaves no room for self-centered leadership or power plays. This leaves room only for love and charity. Remembering that where much is given much is required, it is then required for the wife to turn and render the same unreserved love to her husband – to include harkening to his leadership as the representative of the priesthood in the family.

Paul compared the relationship of the husband and the wife to the relationship between the church and Christ. Does the church dictate to and give in-

structions to Christ? Does the church give Christ a list of what they will and won't do for Him? Does the church decide it knows better and that Christ needs to go sit in a corner and come out only when the church has the need of someone to tote heavy things around the house? Does the church tell Christ He is stupid and to shut up just because He disagrees with the church? Conversely, does Christ neglect the church for personal pleasures? Does he believe his employment in the workforce is more important than his eternal stewardships?

IMPORTANT NOTE:

When this article was first published, I got some very negative feedback from women. Both scriptures used on page 4 (1 Corinthians 7:3-4 and Ephesians 5:22-24) easily start an argument in today's world and truly speak of an "ideal marriage." Even within the Church, a man is in hot water for even referring to them. I have written this note in response to a recent letter from a trusted friend who is a woman and whose opinion matters to me.

In reference to 1 Corinthians 7:3-4, there are women even in the church who believe that they don't even have to do even so little as to hug their husbands or even give him a place to lay his head. "My body is mine and even God can't tell me what to do with it" is a direct quote from a woman in our Gospel Doctrine class, and she can't figure out why she has a rocky marriage. Well, God can tell her what to do with her body, and He's told her exactly the same thing He told her husband about his body. We're not even talking about sexual intimacy; we're talking about loving and comforting – hugging, holding, laying a head on a shoulder. We didn't need Mae West to explain it to us, but she did anyway: "The best way to hold onto your man [or woman] is with with your arms."

But, this scripture does not stand alone, and we make a grave mistake if we allow it to do so. At

8 Ephesians 5:25-27

the same time that both husband and wife are being told the same thing about the use of their body in comforting each other; Ephesians 5:25-27 and Doctrine & Covenants 121:41-46 is telling both husband and wife the level of love and tenderness and consideration they both will show to the other; which includes not abusing or harming each other; not "forcing" each other.

When all three of these scriptures are read together we see that:

ONE, the body of the husband and the body of the wife both belong to God. He created them and He can tell us what to do with them.

TWO, He has commanded both husband and wife to use their body to comfort the other.

THREE, neither husband or wife have the right to force the other to give them a level of physical comfort that the other is not willing.

I must note that we men in the church have been taught all of my life that a man hugs and comforts his wife, no matter how angry he is at her; the teachings of the living prophets do not give us a choice. Why do the women think they have a choice? Is there that much inequality in the teachings of the church?

I have discovered through my life that a wife in need of a hug and comfort erases harsh feelings and helps to bring back the proper spirit. I believe a wife could discover the same thing about hugging her husband.

We had a violent event occur in one particular neighborhood we lived in. I hugged and comforted a next-door neighbor whom I did not like – she was a “witch” and she and I had traded words and neither had backed down. But she was in need of comfort and I was there and I did so. The result was that we got along better. I never did like her, or her me. But there was a kind bond between two adversaries. If it could happen between two neighbors who did not even like each other, imagine what it could do in a marriage!

The 'submitting to the husband' I read in Ephesians 5:22-24 has nothing to do with physical in-

timacy. There are many women who are perfectly happy to submit to every direction given by their bishop and stake president or even the prophet - while at the same time telling their righteous husband to shut up and sit in a corner - "you have no authority over me." They do not understand that from the moment they kneel across the temple altar and make sacred marriage covenants, the husband is her primary priesthood leader; her priesthood line of authority. Not the bishop - her husband. A woman married to a righteous husband counsels with and harkens to her husband before she does the bishop because if he is in fact a righteous husband, he's already hearkening to the bishop, so there is no issue with her following him. If there is an issue, then she does what we all do with a 'church leader' in need of correction: she speaks to him in love and kindness; she expresses her support of him while pointing him the right direction. As was stated in a movie of several years ago, 'the man may be the head of the house, but the woman is the neck.' The neck may not 'order' the head what to do, but it keeps it pointed in the right direction and seeing what it needs to see and lets it think it is making all the discoveries and decisions. In turn, the head blesses the neck with all the love and appreciation it can and calls her "Blessed . . . and he praiseth her" (Proverbs 31:28) – as opposed to what he calls her when she is trying to take sole control of the family and is ordering him about.

One of the reasons I have always made sure my children go to the Salt Lake temple [we live where this is possible] after getting their endowments in a newer temple that uses film to present the Endowment is so they can see one of the great, profound differences in the presentation. Something you don't see in the film version of the Endowment is that whenever a heavenly messenger comes and gives a commandment or covenant to Adam and Eve (as acted out by a temple worker representing them), they give it to Adam first, who then gives it to Eve exactly as he was given it -

Heaven, Man, and Woman all acknowledging the priesthood line of authority. Adam then gives it to his sons, and Eve gives it to her daughters. When heavenly messengers sit in the front of the room, presiding over the proceedings, Adam is sitting on one side of them and Eve on the other side. She is sitting with the heavenly messengers and her husband as equals, but she still receives and reports on things through her primary priesthood holder, that being her husband. She has accepted Adam as her priesthood 'conduit,' her priesthood line of authority, and she respects that line of authority while accepting the Lord's instructions through it and reporting her stewardship through it. They are equals, but in their equality he is the priesthood 'spokesman' for the family. And this being a spokesman for the family is something too many of today's Latter-day Saint women have seemingly rejected.

Knowing that in this next passage, Paul was speaking to a predominately Hellenistic culture that worshiped the 'ideal male body' (think "naked Greek statue") the same way today's media urges us to worship those mythological large chests, gorgeous stomach muscles, and thin waist lines, it is of note that Paul charged these body-conscious men with the following responsibility:

"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."⁹

Notice Paul spent far more time teaching the husbands their responsibilities than he did the wives! He spent the vast majority of these passages instructing the husbands how to treat their wives, and then he said to the women, in effect, 'Oh, and you go and do likewise'. Once again, the same commandment given to both marriage partners.

One final scripture and then we will address the topic this article is actually about. In modern times the Lord has given specific commands as to the maintenance of the wife and children:

"Verily, thus saith the Lord, in addition to the laws of the church concerning women and children, those who belong to the church, who have lost their husbands or fathers: Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken; and if they are not found transgressors they shall have fellowship in the church. And if they are not faithful they shall not have fellowship in the church; yet they may remain upon their inheritances according to the laws of the land.

"All children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance until they are of age. And after that, they have claim upon the church, or in other words upon the Lord's storehouse, if their parents have not wherewith to give them inheritances.

*"And the storehouse shall be kept by the consecrations of the church; and widows and orphans shall be provided for, as also the poor. Amen."*¹⁰

While the husband is commanded to maintain his wife and children, the level at which this maintenance is set is certainly not specified and certainly

⁹ Ephesians 5:28-33

¹⁰ Doctrine & Covenants 83:1-6

should not be decided by a single member of the quorum we call 'a married couple'. Once again considering the passage of 'where much is given much is expected', a true Daughter of God understands that she dare not expect anything from her husband that she is not willing to return in kind. She cannot take the entire paycheck and spend it on herself and the children and leave her husband hungry and in rags. She cannot have a closet full of shoes while getting angry at how much money is being spent on his single, bi-annual pair.

The gratitude the wife shows her husband by maintaining him in a healthy and presentable manner will directly determine how well and constant his maintenance of her will continue.

You Get What You Give

If you want a husband to act towards you with Victorian courtesies, then you must use Victorian courtesies towards him. If you want him to lead in love, then you must follow in love. If you want him to listen and remember, then you must listen and remember. If you want gentleness and tenderness, you must give gentleness and tenderness. If you want a husband whose life is centered around gratitude, service, love, and sacrifice for his family, then you must return it in kind; otherwise you will be telling him that you no longer wish these things from him.

And Men: go thou and do likewise.

While I certainly do *not* support the sort of marriage association that existed in Midevil Europe, neither do I think of women as weaklings who are "unapt to toil and trouble". (I was raised by a woman who learned how to work a farm during the Depression with no power appliances.) However, we can *still* learn from Shakespeare's tamed shrew as she berates two other women still in the shrew stage. And, we men can learn about the Gratitude we should be showing our wives from this same passage; they *do* do a lot for us!:

*"Fie, fie! unknit that threatening unkind brow,
And dart not scornful glances from those eyes,
To wound thy lord, thy king, thy governor:
It blots thy beauty as frosts do bite the meads,
Confounds thy fame as whirlwinds shake fair
buds,
And in no sense is meet or amiable.
A woman moved is like a fountain troubled,
Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty;
And while it is so, none so dry or thirsty
Will deign to sip or touch one drop of it.
Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee,
And for thy maintenance commits his body
To painful labour both by sea and land,
To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,
Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure and safe;
And craves no other tribute at thy hands
But love, fair looks and true obedience;
Too little payment for so great a debt.
Such duty as the subject owes the prince
Even such a woman oweth to her husband;
And when she is froward, peevish, sullen, sour,
And not obedient to his honest will,
What is she but a foul contending rebel
And graceless traitor to her loving lord?
I am ashamed that women are so simple
To offer war where they should kneel for peace;
Or seek for rule, supremacy and sway,
When they are bound to serve, love and obey.
Why are our bodies soft and weak and smooth,
Unapt to toil and trouble in the world,
But that our soft conditions and our hearts
Should well agree with our external parts?
Come, come, you froward and unable worms!
My mind hath been as big as one of yours,
My heart as great, my reason haply more,
To bandy word for word and frown for frown;
But now I see our lances are but straws,
Our strength as weak, our weakness past compare,
That seeming to be most which we indeed least*

11 William Shakespeare, "Taming of the Shrew"
Act Four, Scene Two

are.
 Then vail your stomachs, for it is no boot,
 And place your hands below your husband's foot:

*In token of which duty, if he please,
 My hand is ready; may it do him ease.*

PART TWO: Pleas from the Distressed, Despairing Men

We are now down to the actual things the men responding to these 'Men and Depression' articles have asked me to say. Remember that I am speaking for the good and righteous men; not the overbearing, bossy, abusive men – they can find their own speaker. Examples given are from stories the men have shared with me and names have of course been changed.

Self-Reliant . . . from Your Spouse?

Lucy completed several years of therapy for an abusive childhood. When she was done, she mistakenly believed she had gotten through it all on her own and that no one except the therapist helped her. She proclaimed Self-Reliance as the order of the day, stating that if she got herself through such difficult emotional growth than everyone else can and ought to. She refused from that time to comfort or nourish the husband who got her through her therapy while he dealt with his own depression, and her teenage children suddenly had to handle life on their own as she made it plain that if they were weak enough to ask for help than they were unworthy of her help. When her husband told her that all he needed was to feel her love (he just wanted a hug!), her angry, indignant retort was that it was his responsibility to feel her love (without any evidence being offered) and if he couldn't then he was being selfish and self-centered if he expected her to do anything about it.

The wife who is dependent on a husband who fulfills the divine command of providing for her needs – food, clothing, shelter, worthy priesthood guidance – needs to understand that he is worthy of every kind and grateful act she can commit on

his behalf. To be proud of how much she does not do for him is to trivialize his efforts and belittle him. It is the ultimate ingratitude.

Care About Me!

There are couples even within the church who are mistaking the emphasis on Self-Reliance to mean that they even need to be self-reliant from their spouse's support and aide. Too many women who are still homemakers – full-time in the home - in a need to express their independent womanhood, come to church and are actually proud that their husband gets himself up, makes his own breakfast and lunch, does household chores, and then gets himself off to work – all without her ever rising from bed or even waking up. She sends him out into the world unkissed and uncared for, expecting him to actually return in the evening and pick up where he left off with his household chores, his own laundry and ironing, and taking care of the children, leaving the independent woman free to spend her day doing important things like genealogy and quilting and scrap booking. After all, she proudly exclaims, “Why should I do for him what he can do for himself?”

Aren't we grateful our Savior Jesus Christ never took this same Self-Reliant attitude towards us? Dear Sisters, the one thing your husband cannot do for himself is demonstrate your love, care, and concern for him. You are the only one who can do that. If you don't demonstrate your love and gratitude for him, he cannot feel it, see it, detect it, or believe it even exists. Your actions or - lack of actions - are the final voice. Your husband and his physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual

health is more important to you than anything else. Your love and support keeps him healthy and able to continue support you financially, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. His is to be the breadwinner; you are to be the nurturer, not just of the children, but of your husband as well – this is the family plan God established. Cut off this care and he will either slowly starve or he will find another place to receive nourishment.

The type of man the Daughter of God wants for a husband is the kind that does things to build up and assist his wife even before taking care of himself. He will not take care of his health for himself, but he will for his wife's happiness. He will not shave and comb his hair for himself, but he will clean himself up to make her look good when they go out together. He will not diet for himself but he will because she cares enough to make sure he eats right. If she doesn't care – and show that care! – then he will not care either. That's simply how men are. Her care will keep him alive to provide for her, while her neglect will kill him or drive him away.

Be Quiet and Just Hug Me

One of the remarkable gifts God gave women is the ability to fix things that have to do with the heart and mind. But depression, trauma, and grieving often go beyond this ability. A wise woman needs to know her limits in trying to fix these things. But even within these limits, there is one very important role you must play – or someone else will end up playing it. Love must be administered to your husband by holding him to you and hugging him. Hold his head to your breast. This medicine must be administered without analyzing him or discussing the issue. Sing to him; hum to him; tell him he's your knight in shining armor – but absolutely no discussion, no questions, and no analyzing while administering this Love, or the medicine will sour and he will look for a new pharmacy. Someone in Esther's family told the rest of the family that she simply tells her husband to

”get over it” or “talk to your doctor; I'm not interested” and even withholds her affection until he 'obeys' her. Esther's clarification of this rumor was concise and to the point: “What kind of # \$ % & * do they think I am?” (Her words, not mine; don't ask me to translate.) “Of course I hug him! I'm his wife and I love him. And he's not going to find comfort anywhere but in my arms!”

Esther told me that she tells her husband: “I can't understand what you are going through, but I can love you.” Then she hugs him. She hugs him as long as he needs it and listens for as long as he needs to talk. She says that she listens but does not answer because what he needs is to be able to talk. When he is done she hugs him a little longer and tells him what she thinks he needs to discuss with his therapist. And, she makes sure he takes his medicine.

From birth, life teaches men that a woman's embrace, even being held against the breast, is the source of greatest comfort and consolation. I do not think this is a result of millions of years of evolution; I believe it is of divine origin. To the man's mind and emotions there is nothing to replace it. To hold your man to your breast to comfort and console him is not a sexy, erotic, or exploitive action – it is a sharing of your deepest, most personal love, affection, and comfort. It shows you have faith and trust that the man or child you are holding will respect you – to refuse it is to show distrust and a lack of faith in their love for you. It is also a sharing of love and tenderness that is only shared with the man or child to whom you are deeply attached. It is, as well, a fulfillment of Paul's admonition of not withholding one's self as quoted earlier (1 Corinthians 7:3-4, New Testament). To withhold this comfort is to withhold the deepest, most personal love you can give your man, and that withholding will build resentment.

Darcy is a childhood abuse victim, and although she and her husband bore and raised a large family, she could never bring herself to hold

her husband or her children to her and comfort them. Her husband learned early in their marriage that if the children were ever to be comforted he would have to do it. He has become so adept at showing his gentle nature to a hurting or needy child that a Father's Day card from his daughter bore the simple message: "All that I learned about love I learned from you." The only difference between Darcy and her husband in this regard was that Darcy's husband was willing to 'hug and hold'.

Darcy has been through several years of therapy but she still refuses to comfort and console. In fact, she has gotten to where she will briefly hug and kiss only at family prayer, claiming that since her therapy she cannot stand anyone touching her because of the memories of abuse it brings up. She tells her husband, a chronic depression sufferer, that he needs to get over his "unnatural dependency" of needing to be hugged; he needs to realize that kissing more than once a day is too much and he needs to learn to be more self-reliant. "You're not my responsibility!" she exclaimed when her husband, hurting with a bout of depression, asked for nothing more than a simple hug and a kind word. Her husband finally decided to obey her instructions and has employed a divorce lawyer to assist him in his wife-ordered self-reliance, saying that in his eyes divorce is a lesser sin when compared to suicide.

Once your man has been sufficiently hugged and some shred of sanity returned... Okay, now you can talk to him. Gently and kindly, though; this is still not the time to analyze or criticize.

Please Believe Me!

The perception a depressed, grieving, or traumatized man can have of any given situation can be way off-center from reality. This is where you must remember you are his wife and not his therapist. Seek to understand his viewpoint without having to correct it for him or agreeing with what you believe is a serious case of warped thinking.

Don't lecture him about how wrong he is – lectures will not fix this one! - comfort and console him and let him know "I think you're seeing the situation in the wrong light but I am still on your side." Then lovingly urge him into the counseling of a church leader or mental health professional, and let them aide him in getting his perceptions zeroed in on what is real and what is not. This way you are 'on his side' and yet you are still helping him. He will thank you when all is said and done – the fact that you were on his side through the hell of what he's going through will be a cement that will hold you together for a very long time – a far better cement that you having to have the satisfaction of 'being right'.

Give Me the Help I Need; Not the Help You Demand I Accept

One pitfall of wanting to fix things is that many women decide they know what their man needs, and no amount of talk from their husband, the bishop, or even a mental health professional is going to deter her in what she has decided. 'They are all wrong; I know best' can often be a dangerous, selfish, and self-centered statement.

Listen to your man and hear what he says he needs. You may find that the love and gratitude you receive in return for helping him in the way he thinks he needs help is better than having to be right. Listen to your husband. Listen to your church leaders. Listen to the therapist. Be humble enough to try what they are saying.

Don't Touch My Chocolate!

We all self-medicate; that's just the human in us. Do not take away what your husband uses to self-medicate unless you can replace it with something he feels is better and more effective – or unless it is a harmful self-medication... like alcohol. If a chocolate bar calms him down and keeps him from screaming at the children and turning the house

into a nightmare, then don't deny him his chocolate until you have helped him learn what a good alternative chamomile tea can be – and with far fewer calories. If you're lucky he'll come around on one of your bad days and show what a couple of pieces of chocolate dropped into a steaming mug of chamomile tea can do for your mood! (Trust me, it's Heaven on Earth.)

Sometimes self-medication means building a physical reaction – like spending time building things in the garage or doing yard work at a time when he is alone and can compose himself. Give him this outlet as long as he doesn't carry it into excess.

If, however, he has turned to harmful self-medication such as alcohol or drugs or other things that cause harm – well, that's a different story! Take the steps you need to and call into help the appropriate church and medical assistance to stop destructive self-medication and help replace it with something healthy.

Admit to Your Imperfections

Many men have confessed to me that their wife's denial that she could possibly be doing something to depress him is one of their greatest sources of depression! Sisters, although we rarely dare speak of it, we already know you are not perfect. If you were perfect you would have been taken up into Heaven as was Elijah, and we would be missing you terribly. The fact that you are still on earth is embarrassing, undeniable, and public proof that your Heavenly Father believes you still have room for growth and improvement.

Just as it is your stewardship from God to aide your husband in attaining perfection, so it is your husband's stewardship to aide you in gaining perfection. Thwarting God's steward is to thwart God and your own eventual perfection.

If your husband has the courage to tell you that you are doing something that depresses him, remember the Lord's words to Emma Smith before

angrily exploding all over that courageous man:

*“Continue in the spirit of meekness [gentleness], and beware of pride. Let thy soul delight in thy husband . . .”*¹²

Previous articles in this series established that 'gentle' was a more accurate translation than 'meek' while reading the New Testament, so let's apply that translation here and say that the Lord is telling dear Sister Emma to “continue in the spirit of 'gentleness', and beware of pride.”

Listen to your husband in the spirit of gentleness and love. Continue to encourage him in his recovery. Be humble enough to examine yourself and see if, by some chance, you could possibly be doing something in a way that would be taken negatively by the man with which you are trying to build an eternal future. If needed, be willing to accompany him to his therapist so the therapist can judge the validity of your alleged imperfection. Remember that any marriage built on the belief that the woman is already perfect rarely lasts past the youngest child's adulthood.

I now need to turn around and remind the men standing behind me that when they speak to their beloved wife about her imperfections they need to follow this same advise - continue in the spirit of gentleness and beware of pride. For those who need this 'spirit of gentleness' further defined, the Lord broke it down item-by-item in Section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants, as quoted earlier.

Remember: just because a man can state verbally that you have a fault does not mean he doesn't love you – it is, rather, proof he loves you enough to brave your wrath! Be the gentle Daughter of God you say you are and listen to your priesthood leader's love for you. Your inability to listen to him will rob you of the love and support your husband could give you, while gently harkening to him will bring you in line with God's plan for your happiness. (One of the many reasons

¹² Doctrine & Covenants 25:14; note by this author

you help your husband through his hard times is to ensure that you have a Son of God leading home who can be an able conduit for the Holy Spirit - so build up that resource and then utilize it, even when you disagree with it.)

No More Male-Bashing

Even church-going women are falling prey to the current worldly trend of “male-bashing”. Jokes told at church and in shared e-mails make men the receiving end of all the world's ills while driving out of proportion those things women think are strange and silly in their men. An occasional joke is fine, but to make it a sport as so many women are doing – even in the church! - is to tell your man over and over again how stupid and worthless he is in your eyes.

A distressed man does not need to be bashed or made fun of. He needs to be comforted and fellowshiped. He and his feelings need to be respected and cherished by his wife. His wife needs to realize the precious gift it is that he trusts her with his feelings and emotions; he does not need to go to church to find out he was the center of the jokes told in Relief Society the Sunday before. He does not need to hear his wife, sister, mother, or daughter comparing him to the latest 'male-bashing' email the sisters are sharing among themselves.

Along with male-bashing, many church-going women are also falling prey to the current trend of female superiority. Both Man and Woman have God-given roles that are different from each other but of equal importance in the eyes of the Lord. Both roles must be equally respected. If you wish for the roles of Women, Womanhood, and Motherhood to be respected and cherished by men, then you must respect and cherish the roles of Men, Manhood, and Fatherhood.

Too many church-going women are also beginning to take an unhealthy advantage of an emphasis by many church leaders for the men to show more and more respect to women, and there

are women who are reaching the point that they are abusing men while smiling and telling them that they have to respect them because they are a woman. Sisters, your husbands have asked me to remind you that we don't have to accept abuse just because we are supposed to respect you – any more than you have to accept abuse from us just because we are men.

When Is a Marriage Built?

A marriage is built on the foundation of how well we have struggled through this life and helped each other along the way. When a man is trapped in the hell of depression and trauma and his wife is the one who reaches into the dark to help him out and holds him close, their marriage is once again cemented with a love that will last. If, however, the wife is the one who turns him away to find that help from others, then the love, trust, gratitude, and devotion that should have been awarded to her alone is awarded to the other, and ties that should have bound him to his wife now bind him to another.

And to the men I say: This works both ways. Be there for your wife, or someone else will be.

Conclusion

A wife does not – and should not – be her husband's therapist, and even her husband knows this. She has a more important role - that of being her husband's companion, confidant, comforter, and friend. Within these roles she loves him, consoles him, comforts him, and helps him find the help he needs. In doing so she seals upon herself her husband's devotion, attention, trust, faith, and loyalty. To not do so is to drive him into someone else's arms and help seal his affection upon someone else.

Dearest Sisters: I hope you have read this in the same spirit of Love in which I have written it. Some of this was very daring for me to write, but

after all I have survived on this path I've been writing about, I have the courage to say it in hopes that my voice will help others on the same journey. The distressed and despairing men who have written me have asked me to send a specific message, and I have obediently done so. God bless

you in the trials you go through with your hurting man, and my prayers for you are that you cling to the Lord while aiding your husband. May God's fondest blessing be on you as you help your man recover.