

Woman Among the Pillars - 2

Stu points out the power that any woman can exercise when she serves her husband well. That means she always acts in his best interest, whether he deserves it or not, and whether she feels like it or not. He uses the example of Abigail, wife of Nabal (whose name means "fool"), who dissuaded David from exterminating Nabal and his household after Nabal insulted David and his 400 warriors (that's a fool all right). She stopped an army in its tracks by applying the gentle grace of femininity. She smoothed down the ruffled feathers, appealed to David's kingly role, and let him know that although he had a reason and the power to do what he intended, it would not be the right thing to do - and she said it with all sincerity and humility. She defended her husband's dignity as she pleaded for him in his foolishness. In that cloak of grace and diplomacy, she saved her husband's life. She earned her husband's trust - and David's. Having earned that trust, "her husband was then free to be and do what God intended for him."

A woman who can do that has won over her husband, as he is able to observe "her chaste and respectful behavior.. the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God." Stu says, "It is only when we feel respected and admired that we are able to be transparent. It is only when we feel safe that we can be open. It is only when we know that our lady will do us good and not harm that we can trust her with our wounded insides, the real us. A wise woman *learns* how to deal with that fragile male ego. She knows about the power of her femininity, and she will not abuse it any more than a biblical husband will abuse his masculine headship."

Stu writes that one of a man's deepest needs is the need for respect, particularly from his own wife. A man appreciates being loved. But what he really wants, down deep at his core, is *respect*. And he will do almost anything in order to be respected by his wife. Knowing that, a wife would have to be out of her mind to belittle him. She would be destroying the very power she has over him to prompt him to greatness, and enable him to earn her respect. She needs to continually affirm that she will follow him anywhere and support him in whatever he chooses to do to provide for her. He has an obligation to provide for her physically, emotionally, and spiritually. What happens when he doesn't?

A woman who constantly complains about not having enough money for this, or constantly tells her husband that he is not a good provider, is belittling him. If she constantly berates her husband for failing to meet all of her emotional needs, she is telling him that he is not a good provider. If she constantly nags her husband about why he is not reading the Bible or attending Sunday School or Worship service, she is telling him that he is not a good provider. The wife sets the emotional tone of the home. She is the thermostat. However she feels, everyone around her will shortly begin to feel the same way, for better or worse.

If she tries to manipulate her husband, and makes it her life work to change him, she will reap a lifetime of misery and frustration. We cannot change other people. We can only change ourselves and our reactions to other people. If a wife develops a positive mental image of her husband and begins to treat him as if he matched that image, then in the end he will become what she envisioned. And that won't be because she tried to change him. It will be because she created in her husband an overwhelming desire to please her, and to gain her respect.

Yet, if a wife becomes overly dependent on her husband to fulfill her every need, and to determine how she should feel about herself, and her life, and her sense of success, then that dependence is wrongly placed. That kind of burden belongs on God's shoulders, not on her husband's. Having these kinds of unreasonable expectations of other people is crushing to the human spirit. It smothers people. It shows a lack of respect for them. It drives people away. And it destroys marriages. There has to be balance, and there has to be an inner reservoir of strength from which to draw. I've always told my kids that for a marriage to work, there must be 2 givers. If one is a giver and the other is a taker, the taker will take until the giver is bled dry. If both are takers, then they will produce a vacuum. But if you have 2 givers, then a reciprocal dynamo is created of endless energy and growth. Stu's whole book is about how to become a giver in marriage, and it is directed at both the husband and the wife.

Tomorrow I'm going to finish with what Stu and his Women of Strength have developed to teach women how to become completers instead of competitors. It is a practical, and do-able series of steps that can be used to become a Proverbs 31 kind of woman. Having read that passage, most wives conclude that such a woman doesn't exist - *cannot* exist - it is an impossible dream. And yet in reading the list, I think Stu and his counselors have shown it is entirely possible. It is a kind of guidebook to properly exercising the extraordinary power that God has given a woman over her man, without manipulating him, and without disrespecting him.