

## Stand By Your Man – Helping Your Husband Be a Spiritual Leader<sup>i</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Submit to one another in fear of the Messiah. <sup>22</sup>Wives should submit to their husbands as they do to the L-rd; <sup>23</sup>because the husband is head of the wife, just as the Messiah, as head of the Messianic Community, is himself the one who keeps the body safe. <sup>24</sup>Just as the Messianic Community submits to the Messiah, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup>As for husbands, love your wives, just as the Messiah loved the Messianic Community, indeed, gave himself up on its behalf, <sup>26</sup>in order to set it apart for G-d, making it clean through immersion in the mikveh, so to speak, <sup>27</sup>in order to present the Messianic Community to himself as a bride to be proud of, without a spot, wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without defect. <sup>28</sup>This is how husbands ought to love their wives - like their own bodies; for the man who loves his wife is loving himself. <sup>29</sup>Why, no one ever hated his own flesh! On the contrary, he feeds it well and takes care of it, just as the Messiah does the Messianic Community, <sup>30</sup>because we are parts of his Body. <sup>31</sup>"Therefore a man will leave his father and mother and remain with his wife, and the two will become one." <sup>32</sup>There is profound truth hidden here, which I say concerns the Messiah and the Messianic Community. <sup>33</sup>However, the text also applies to each of you individually: let each man love his wife as he does himself, and see that the wife respects her husband.

If most men are going to make it as spiritual leaders, they must have the deliberate help of their wives in doing so. Is there a way to help your husband be a spiritual leader? Yes there is! G-d gives clear instructions to husbands to be the leaders (heads) of their home. (See Ephesians 5:21—33.) In this position the husband is to provide direction without being domineering. He is to be a provider and protector without being possessive. Most of all he is to provide the home spiritual leadership.

When it comes to spiritual leadership, most men feel inadequate and unqualified. Many feel that their wives are better readers and students of the Bible than they are. It requires a major effort for most men to initiate a spiritual activity in the family, such as praying before the meal, reading the Scripture after the meal, and taking steps to cleanse the home. Usually, the slightest resistance from the wife is more than enough to discourage him. Therefore, since a man's identity, goals, finances, priorities, marriage, and children are all directly affected by the level of his spiritual leadership, it is the wife's highest challenge and calling to be a "helpmeet" to him in this area.

### A Leader Is Made By A Follower

The greatest man in the world cannot be a leader if he has no follower. On the other hand, the humblest husband in the world is a leader if his wife is a follower. The kind of follower that G-d wants a wife to be is not one with blind obedience, but one with wise and godly abilities, such as those demonstrated by Esther, Sarah, and the Shunammite woman and the Proverbs 31 woman (an *echet chayil*).

### A Leader Is Strengthened By Respect

Scripture instructs a wife to reverence her husband. This is difficult when she observes major character weaknesses in him. How do you do it then? G-d wants every wife, however, to look beyond the human deficiencies of her husband and see that G-d has given him a position through which G-d will direct and bless. A wife is to respect the G-d-ordained office of her husband even when his human responses do not measure up to it. If commanded to do evil, she would have to reject his command; but in so doing she should never be disrespectful to his Scriptural authority. The more a wife demonstrates her confidence that G-d is working through her husband, the more aware he will be of his Scriptural position. Also the more a wife looks to her husband for direction, the more careful he will tend to be in his final decisions.

## **A Leader Is Motivated By A Learner**

Most men rise to leadership when a need is identified and brought to them. Even if they are not qualified to meet the need, they will be motivated to go to others for help if they realize that the one who has come with the need is looking to them for a solution.

At this point most women make a serious mistake. They do not come to their husband with their spiritual questions and needs. If a wife has a question about a Scripture passage, she will usually ask her pastor, a Bible teacher, or some other spiritual authority. Her reason for not going to her husband is obvious to her. He probably will not know the answer, he is not interested in spiritual things, or he is not a Believer. A wife who understands what motivates a husband will realize, however, that none of these reasons are valid excuses for failing to bring a spiritual question to her husband.

Perhaps you have had fears and emotions which you have never shared with your husband. You may feel guilty for even having such fears, or you may be hoping that they will soon pass away. You may fear rejection from your husband if he knew what your fears were, or you may have decided that you do not want to add more burdens to him. It may also be that you do not realize that *G-d* delights in giving your husband answers to your questions. Whatever the reason, it is important to remember that one of the strongest motivations in a man is his desire to protect you. Therefore, when the *L-rd* provides the right opportunities, it is important to form your own questions around the following well-documented fears of a wife: (1) failing as a wife or a mother, (2) growing old, (3) ill health due to past sins, (4) special awkwardness, (5) educational deficiency, (6) future of the children, (7) becoming unattractive, (8) insecurity if the husband were to die, (9) loss of the husband's job, (10) physical safety when alone, (11) being displaced by another and (12) having a mental breakdown.

*"Sometimes its hard to be a woman, giving all your love to just one man. You'll have bad times, and he'll have good times doing things that you don't understand. But if you love him you'll forgive him, even though he's hard to understand. And if you love him, Oh be proud of him. 'Cause after all he's just a man. Stand by your man, give him two arms to cling to, and something warm to come to, when nights are cold and lonely. Stand by your man, and tell the world you love him, keep giving all the love you can. Stand by your man, stand by your man. And show the world you love him, keep giving all the love you can, stand by your man." T. Wynette, 1968*

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<sup>i</sup> Based on *Training Faithful Women*, IBLP, 1984, USA