

# Counseling Women to be Godly Wives

## I. Introduction

### A. For this workshop I would like to cover four areas:

1. A foundational overview
2. Assessment tools and homework
3. Common problems with the wife
4. Common problems with the counselor

## II. Foundational Overview

### A. Make sure she has a joy in the Lord

1. This is the everyday, ordinary Christian life. Romans 5:1-2
2. Only God can give her that joy, make sure she is born again. Jh.3:16
3. She must be growing in the Lord – daily Bible reading, prayer, a delight in who God is and His sovereignty, see God's Divine purposes behind all of her circumstances.  
1 Peter 2:1-3
4. Help her cultivate a heart's longing and desire for God. Psalm 42

### B. God's original intent

1. Genesis 2:18
2. 1 Corinthians 11:9. Teach her that it is not possible to have a more clear and plain record of God's intent than these two verses and that His intent has not changed.

### C. A mission of love

1. Titus 2:4 (*philos* love, to think of him as a beloved, cherish friend).  
-- help her think of herself in terms of being a **servant**. Phil.2:3-4
2. What can she do to make her husband's life more comfortable, more inviting, more honoring to the Lord?  
-- Her husband is her primary ministry.

### D. A woman's place

1. Ephesians 5:23-24. Lovingly and patiently teach her that the position of subordination to her husband is never a bad place to be because...

### E. God's will is always good, acceptable, and perfect (Romans 12:2)

1. Remind her that "**it is He who has made us...**" (Psalm 100).
2. Functioning within God's will is the best possible place that anyone could be.

## I. Assessment tools and Homework

### A. Questions

1. How long have you been married?
2. How many times have you been married, the length of time for each marriage, and the reason the marriage ended.
3. Your and your husband's name and age and employment.
4. If you could change one thing about your marriage, what would it be?
5. What about your marriage wouldn't you change?
6. Your and your husband's health/ pertinent medications.
7. If I could ask your husband what you need to work on, what would he say?

### B. Check the one in each row that most describes you

OUTGOING, FRIENDLY	SHY, RESERVED	IN BETWEEN
KIND, TENDERHEARTED	HARD-HEARTED, MEAN	BOTH AT VARYING TIMES
WORK HARD TO KEEP PERFECT HOUSE	ORGANIZED, REASONABLY CLEAN	UNORGANIZED, HOUSE IN DISARRAY
CONSIDER MYSELF MORE IMPORTANT THAN MY HUSBAND	CONSIDER US TO BE EQUALLY IMPORTANT	CONSIDER MY HUSBAND AS MORE IMPORTANT
PASSIONATE DESIRE TO BE USED FOR GOD'S GLORY	UP AND DOWN SPIRITUALLY	MY DESIRE FOR THINGS OF THE LORD HAS BEEN CROWDED OUT BY BUSINESS OF LIFE
STRONGLY DISLIKE BEING AROUND MY HUSBAND	SOMETIMES ENJOY & SOMETIMES DISLIKE BEING AROUND MY HUSBAND	ENJOY BEING AROUND MY HUSBAND ALMOST ALWAYS

ENJOY AND LOOK  
FORWARD TO HAVING  
SEX WITH MY HUSBAND

SOMETIMES ENJOY  
& SOMETIMES DREAD  
SEX WITH MY  
HUSBAND

DREAD HAVING  
SEX WITH MY  
HUSBAND

HIGH REGARD FOR  
HIS OPINION

REGARD FOR HIS  
OPINION VARIES

LITTLE OR NO  
REGARD FOR HIS  
OPINION

LOVE MY HUSBAND  
DEARLY

USED TO LOVE HIM  
BUT DON'T NOW

NEVER LOVED  
HIM

I'M PROUD OF MY  
HUSBAND

I'M ASHAMED OF  
MY HUSBAND

I'M SOMEWHERE  
INBETWEEN

- C. Self-Talk Log: write down what you are thinking whenever you feel hurt, anxious, frustrated, resentful, or overwhelmed.
- D. The Put-Off and Put-On Bible Study (in the back of *Attitudes of a Transformed Heart* or you can receive the Bible study for free at [www.marthapeace.com](http://www.marthapeace.com)).
- E. *The Excellent Wife* book and study guide (might want to use selected chapters if don't have time to disciple her through the whole book or you can use the charts from the book to gather data/ teaching tool)

## II. Ten Common Problems when Counseling Wives (in order of frequency)

### A. Bitterness

1. She will feel hurt or resentful.
2. Explain that often a bitter person plays what happened over and over in her mind.  
1 Corinthians 13:5
3. Begin by helping her see the need to take the beam out of her eye.  
Matt. 7:1-5
4. Exhort her to fight back and overcome evil with good. Romans 12:21
5. Explain that forgiveness is not an option. Eph. 4:31-32; Matt. 18:21-35

## B. What to do about the husband's sin

1. John Angell James (19<sup>th</sup> century Congregational Preacher from England) writes in his book *Female Piety*, "the wife is a companion, **counselor**, and comforter of man."
2. Teach the wife to go to her husband very gently with a motive to restore him (the issue is not revenge, it is an act of love to try to help him). She should use Scripture and be very specific with clear examples, urge him to repent and give God glory, offer to help.  
Galatians 6:1; Matthew 18:15
3. If he refuses to hear it, then she should assume he did not repent and proceed with Matthew 18:15-18.
4. If he verbally attacks her, she should not defend herself, instead she should stick to the issue, "Honey, I love you but this is sin and you say you are a Christian. So, you have to repent." If he accuses *her* of wrong behavior, she could say something like "I will be glad to discuss what I am doing wrong at another time but right now the issue is..."
5. Explain to her ahead of time that if her husband reacts sinfully and her motive truly is to help him honor God, then she will be suffering for righteousness sake.
6. She should be prepared to seek shelter or call 911 if necessary. If he is known to be violent, she should have a couple of big strong godly men with her.
7. If he is an unbeliever, appeal to him to "do what is right." That appeals to his conscience. Don't use Scripture.
8. The wife has a responsibility to love God by obeying His clear commands to go to an erring brother. She should be an accurate witness, factual and not exaggerate neither should she underplay what has happened. Either way, she would be a false witness.
9. To try (in an appropriate, kind, and loving way) to help her husband would be consistent with the character of God (His holiness), the "one another's" in Scripture, and the seriousness of keeping the church pure (hence, church discipline).

## C. Unequally yoked

1. Don't expect him to think or act like a Christian.
2. Don't be hurt if he does not desire to attend church.
3. She can love her husband whether her husband is a failure before God or not.
4. Plan and do things that he would like, give him blessings.
5. Think of him in endearing terms – the father of my children, my husband, the man who provides for me and the children, the man who has stuck by me even when I didn't deserve for him to.

6. Socialize with his friends but draw the line at personal sin.
7. Pray for him.
8. Be prepared to give the gospel or answer his questions about the Lord.
9. Work hard at being a chaste and respectful wife. 1 Peter 3
10. Feel tenderness towards him – remember if he doesn't come to know the Lord, he will spend eternity in hell.
11. Teach her the biblical principles on being a godly wife.
12. She should work hard at maintaining an organized loving home.
13. Consider him as more important than herself. Phil. 2:3-4

#### D. Unbiblical/immature expectations

1. She may expect to have a warm, fuzzy feeling every time he comes home from work.
2. She may not have expected the hard work involved with keeping a home and cooking for a husband.
3. She may expect him to never have an opinion about decorating the house or that she can spend money however she pleases.
4. She may expect him to eat Sunday dinner each Sunday with her Mother.
5. She may expect him to never be tired after work and to entertain her.
6. She may expect him to not have any annoying mannerisms.
7. She may expect him to arrange the decorator pillows on the bed just like she would.
8. She may expect him to be as spiritually mature as her pastor “seems” to be.
9. Teach her to be forbearing (putting up with differentness) and to put him first. She should tell her husband if something is bothering her but if his annoying mannerism doesn't change, then she should love him anyway and thank the Lord for it.

#### E. Wearing the pants/role reversal

1. Teach her the biblical principles on submission, what it is and what it is not – six biblical principles in *The Excellent Wife* book –
2. If her husband won't make decisions, instead of doing a “take over” or doing nothing, she should consider it a sin issue and biblically confront him, etc.

#### F. The “It's all about me!” syndrome

1. Selfishness is a lack of love! Corinthians 13:5
2. Teach her the basic biblical doctrine of loving others.
3. Depsychologize her if she is desiring and seeking to have her needs met, her worth, her identity, her significance.

4. *Psychologized Man* by Martha Peace; *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology* by Ed Bulkley, as well as many resources ACBC people have written and lectured on.

G. Sex – not enough or too much

1. I recommend teaching her the biblical principles on sex in *The Christian Counselor's Manual* by Jay Adams.
2. Often women are somewhat “freed up” to be more responsive to their husbands when I share the verse in Proverbs 5:18-19 and explain what *satisfy* means (it's like the word satiated – he has so much that he wouldn't want more even if tempted).
3. If he refuses to have sex with her then she should talk to him, see if there is a problem physically and even if there is, he can still be intimate with her and bring her to climax. If he won't, then it is a sin issue and she should lovingly reprove him, etc.

H. Lack of knowledge about how to be a godly wife

1. This is very common even with women who have grown up in the church.
2. Simply teach them basic biblical principles -- use Scripture and practical illustrations.
3. The wife has three basic biblical responsibilities – to love her husband, to be biblically submissive, and to show respect.

I. Proud/secretive/closed off/shy

1. This is a disaster waiting to happen. Someone like this is proud, self-absorbed, and overly sensitive and even if her husband tries hard to be a good husband, she will become offended easily. 1Cor.4:5;Pro. 27:5-6
2. Help her identify these sins by using a self-talk log and simply talking with her and getting to know her.
3. Teach her the put-off and put-on concept and hold her accountable.
4. Stuart Scott's booklet, *From Pride to Humility*

J. Feels sorry for herself

1. Exhort her to seek to be used by the Lord even if in difficult circumstances.
2. Her responsibility is to put on gratitude and praise and put off grumbling, complaining, and “poor me” syndrome. 1 Thes. 5:18; Eph.5:20

### III. Common Problems with the Counselor

#### A. Takes up an offense for the wife

1. Have to always keep in the back of your mind that there is another side to the story.
2. No matter what he has done (and sometimes husbands can do some awful things) the Lord can save him, grant him repentance, and that is what we should want.
3. There is a balance between biblically, rightfully protecting the wife and wanting to help the husband. As counselors, we can do both.
4. Whenever a wife comes to me with problems with her husband, I begin by helping her take the beam out of her eye and then if her husband doesn't repent, it is her responsibility to bring in other witnesses and then the elders. Even if the husband doesn't go to church or go to your church, the elders should try to contact him and talk to him.

#### B. Unbiblical dogmatism

1. This is imposing your personal standards on others. It is legalism.
2. We must be very careful not to overstep the bounds of Scripture. That's what cults do and as counselors we have tremendous influence for good or evil.
3. If unsure about certain counsel, ask your elders. That's what I do.

#### C. Failure to pray

1. It is the Lord and the Lord only who grants repentance and gives hope. He has gifted us with spiritual gifts and we are a means of grace to others but we must often be reminded of our dependence on Him.
2. Plan regular times to pray for your counselees and for your own wisdom and, of course, pray (if not before) at the end of each session.

#### D. Knowing when to set limits

1. Wives are often in great emotional turmoil and circumstances arise when they should not wait until their normal appointment to contact you. Certainly you must be available at times like that.
2. Some will call you too much and really consume your time if you let them. Ask questions to help them focus on one thing that you can help them with. If they are getting bogged down into too many details, gently interrupt and say, "It's OK if I don't know all the details, tell me how this conversation ended and then I'll ask more questions if I need to." Or you can say, "What is your question?" or you can give them an assignment – "Hang up the phone and go read Psalm 42 three or four times and then write your own prayer to the Lord or tell them upfront,

“I don’t have much time now so what is the “bottom-line” question you have” or you can say “I don’t have much time now but if you want to schedule a time to talk, then let’s do that.”

3. It is not good for a counselee to call and just vent and vent about how they feel or what is happening. They need a biblical focus and it shouldn’t take much time for you to do that for them.
4. If they become overly clingy (jealous of your time, begin to idolize you), then simply tell them, “I want to be your friend and also to help you, but you are going to ruin our relationship if you continue to sin in this way.” Help them to see their sin and to repent. If they don’t repent, stop seeing them.

E. Assume counselee has a solid doctrinal foundation

1. I assume no one has a solid doctrinal foundation but as you talk with them, what they know and understand will be apparent. Even if they have had a lot of teaching, you still need to cover the basic doctrines and principles they need to know.

F. Add to her burden by having a wrong view of reproof

1. Those who hold to a view that the wife is never to reprove her husband really do add to her burden. What often happens is she will continue to cover up for her husband’s sin until she becomes so exasperated and bitter that she becomes the major problem! Or she becomes a major tattle-tale going behind her husband’s back and straight to the pastor.
2. We can help her not to be unnecessarily caught in unbiblical dogmatism by being “for” her husband and wanting the best for him and to help her truly learn what it means to “overcome evil with good.”  
Romans 12:21
3. If you have questions on this, I suggest you get a copy of my CD that I did one year at ACBC (and also this year) on “Misperceptions on Biblical Submission.”

#### IV. Conclusion

#### Recommended Resources:

Fitzpatrick, Elyse. [Helper By Design](#). Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2003.

Green, Rob. [Tying the Knot](#). Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016.

Haught, Karen B. [God Empowered Wife](#). Intention, 2008.

Kellemen, Robert. [Gospel-Centered Marriage Counseling](#). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2020.

Mack, Wayne. [Strengthening Your Marriage](#). Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co, 1977.

Peace, Martha & Crotts, John. [Tying the Knot Tighter](#). Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Co, 2007.

Peace, Martha. [Excellent Wife](#). Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 1999.

Peace, Martha. [Precious Truths in Practice](#). Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2019.