

Message Series: Making Marriage Work

“Helper Does Not Mean Enabler” – Part 2

Introduction:

1. A healthy home should be a place that builds up and affirms the **value** of each member. Ephesians 5:25, 28, 33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21
2. But, many families have become dysfunctional.
 - “Dysfunctional” describes a state of not **working** correctly.
 - A dysfunctional family has gotten **stuck** in unhealthy relationship patterns, and actually begins **breaking** down its members emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.
 - Because everyone is affected when one member experiences a problem, it is possible for the entire family to become unhealthy in **response** to the hurt, broken, dysfunctional behavior of one member.
3. Family members can begin to **over**-compensate for the dysfunctional family member.
 - Once this happens, the irresponsible member does not have to resume his proper place in the family.
 - He is allowed to **remain** irresponsible because other members of the family have **enabled** him to do so. This is not God’s way.
2 Thessalonians 3:11-15
 - *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”* Galatians 6:1
4. When a husband’s behavior has severely damaged the marriage, many times the wife has had a hand in creating, or at least perpetuating, the problem. She became an **enabler** to her husband.

I. Why does a wife enable her husband?

- A. Because of a misunderstanding of biblical submission.
- The clear focus of Ephesians 5:22-33 is not on the wife **enabling** wrong behavior in the husband, but on her affirming her husband's position of leadership, and **helping** him to become the man and leader God wants him to be.
- B. Because she feels the truth is too **painful** to face.
- Satan is the author of deceit; God is the author of **truth**.
John 8:32; 44-47
- C. Because she is concerned for herself and her children's **security**.
- Is your trust in your husband or in God? Psalm 118:5-8
- D. Because she has developed some very unhealthy patterns of her own.
1. She possesses a **shame**-based identity.
 2. She is unaware of the right to set personal **boundaries**.
 - Boundaries are those invisible barriers that tell others where they **stop** and where you begin.
 - It's okay to expect others to **respect** your boundaries.
 3. She always feels that **she** is the problem for thinking there is a problem.
 - She has conditioned herself to **ignore** problems, **excuse** them, or take **blame** for them.
 - The Bible clearly teaches that each person is to take personal responsibility for his or her sinful actions.
Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18:20-21; Romans 14:12
 - Each member of the family must take personal responsibility for his or her **sinful** actions, and the rest of the family is right in expecting and demanding that he or she does so.

II. What is the biblical solution for wives who enable their husbands?

- A. Open the **eyes** of your heart. Psalm 139:23-24
1. God can help you work out any problem, but not if you **pretend** that problems don't exist.
 2. If any of the following conditions apply to you, seek **help** immediately:
 - If there is physical abuse of any kind, either by you or your husband, toward any member of the family.
 - If you are afraid to speak your own mind or express your feelings.
 - If you take responsibility for your husband's behavior or his feelings (for example, if you blame yourself when he gets angry).
 - If you make excuses or "cover" for your husband's behavior (for example, if you call in sick for him when he is hung over).
 - If there is any sexual infidelity.
 - If you feel guilt or shame over the way your husband treats you.
 - If there are addictions or substance abuses of any kind (for example, alcohol, drugs, pornography, sex, gambling, even work).
 - If there is chronic debt, chronic unemployment, or frequent changes from job to job.
 - If there are constant, chronic arguments and conflict.
 - If weeks or months go by without serious, heart-to-heart talks between you and your husband concerning any serious problems you believe are present in your relationship.
 - If there are weeks or months that go by without intimacy between you and your spouse.

- B. Confront your husband with a right ***spirit***.
1. Confrontation is ***very tough***, but ***very biblical***.
Galatians 6:1-2; Leviticus 19:17; Matthew 18:15-17; Titus 1:13;
Galatians 2:11-14
 2. Here are a few questions to ask yourself:
 - Is his sin dishonoring God?
 - Is his sin damaging your relationship?
 - Is his sin hurting others?
 - Is his sin hurting or jeopardizing himself?
 3. If the answer is yes to any of these questions, confrontation is essential and God ***expects*** it.
- C. If he does not respond, seek help from ***others***. Matthew 18:15-17

In Conclusion:

1. Husbands, if you are distressing your family, get ***help***.
 - Have the courage to accept responsibility for your behavior, and seek out someone to help you make ***changes***.
2. Wives, be on guard against ***enabling*** your husband to “get away” with irresponsible, abusive behaviors.
 - God doesn’t expect you to ***suffer*** in silence.