

HELPING WIVES WHOSE HUSBANDS STRUGGLE WITH PORNOGRAPHY

I. Introduction

You never know how God is going to use the Biblical advice that you give someone. When confronted with their sin, God may harden the husband's heart or He may grant them repentance; but the wife has to *try* and in her effort, she is glorifying God whether her husband does or not. Plus she is showing love to her husband whether he perceives it that way or not.

A. For this workshop I want to do the following:

1. How to give hope and direction to the wife.
2. Walk you through the Biblical resources that God has given to protect a wife whose husband is sinning.
3. Compare fearful/prideful thoughts the wife may have with God-honoring biblical thoughts that she should have.
4. Evaluate further resources to help the wife.

II. Giving Hope

A. A wife in a situation like this likely struggles at many levels:

Embarrassment; if the husband has committed adultery she may be considering divorce; fear over what the future holds; the husband may have difficulty responding to her intimacy needs; the husband may try to require perverted, painful intimacy acts from her; she is likely very bitter and angry; she does not trust her husband; he may have introduced her to pornography and she now struggles with it; the husband may be manipulating her if she does not stay quiet about his problem.

B. Statements from the Counselor that Give Hope

1. I am so sorry that you are going through this.
2. No matter what your husband ultimately does, *you* can show love to him and love to God in the process.

3. You can be *faithful* to God whether your husband repents or not.
4. It would not matter who your husband was married to, this is his sin in his heart. I know it is difficult to not take this personally, but your focus needs to be on God (by obeying Him) and your husband (by speaking the truth in love).
5. I am committed to praying for you and helping you go through this.
6. This will not be easy, but God will help you and I will help you.

C. Statements from God that Give Hope and Direction

1. "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Hebrews 13:5
2. "I am faithful and will never give you more than you can bear. I will give you a way of escape and meanwhile give you grace to bear up under it." 1 Corinthians 10:13
3. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:10
4. "If you ask Me, I will give you wisdom." James 1:5-8
5. "Come to Me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30
6. "Let not your heart be troubled, believe in God, believe also in Me." John 14:1
7. "I will supernaturally work this situation for your good and My glory to make you more Christ-like." Romans 8:28-30
8. "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Romans 12:21
9. "Walk as a [child] of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them." Ephesians 5:8-11
10. "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." Ephesians 4:31-32
11. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith

- for a salvation read to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him.” 1 Peter 1:3-8
12. “Do not let your adorning be external – the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear – but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious.” 1 Peter 3:3-4
13. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:6-7

III. Biblical Resources God Has Given to Protect a Wife Whose Husband is Sinning

[From *The Excellent Wife* book, Chapter 14]ⁱ

A. Resource # 1 -- Communicate biblically. Proverbs 16:23

1. She must get control of her TONGUE. James 3:2.
2. Her speech should be with GRACE. Colossians 4:6.
3. Failure to communicate biblically is SIN. Eph. 4:29.

B. Resource # 2 -- Overcome evil with good. Romans 12:21.

1. Romans 12:21 is a COMMAND.
2. Think of and do "good." 1 Peter 3:9; 3 John 11.

Examples of how to fight evil with good:

PRAY FOR HIM, GET GAS FOR HIS CAR, KIND SOFT WORDS, THANK/PRAISE HIM, SPECIAL MEAL, CONFESS FAILURES, UNEXPECTED GIFT, REAFFIRM COMMITMENT, SPECIAL TIME OF LOVE MAKING

3. If you don't feel like returning evil with good, you may be BITTER. Romans 12:19.
4. Giving a "blessing instead" is like going a SECOND MILE. Matthew 5:41; Hebrews 12:14; Hebrews 10:36.

C. Resource # 3 -- Make a biblical appeal. Proverbs 16:21.

- 1.A biblical appeal is a REQUEST or PLEA to a person in authority for the purpose of asking them to reconsider or reevaluate a command, directive, or instruction.
- 2.The wife should give her husband the BENEFIT of wise counsel and advice. Proverbs 1:5.
- 3.The conditions of the appeal: NOT TO MANIPULATE, RESPECTFUL, PROPER TIME, ONE TIME (UNLESS NEW INFO), WILLING TO COMPLY (UNLESS SIN), BIBLICALLY BASED (GOOD).
- 4.If appealing to an unbeliever, appeal not on the basis of Scripture but to his CONSCIENCE. [“It’s not right...”] Ro. 8:7.
- 5.The wife must ACCEPT her husband's decision as God's will for her at the moment. 1 Peter 3:17.

D. Resource # 4 -- Give a biblical reproof. Galatians 6:1.

- 1.A biblical reproof is telling someone what they are doing CONTRARY to God's Word.
- 2.It is not true that a Christian wife is not ever to reprove her husband. 1 Peter 3:1,2; 1 Peter 2:7,8.
- 3.It is also not true that a Christian wife should never reprove her husband because she must love him UNCONDITIONALLY and accept him as he is. Pro. 27:5; 1 Corinthians 8:1; 2Timothy 3:16,17; 1 Corinthians 13:6; Proverbs 9:8; James 5:19,20; 1 Peter 4:8.
- 4.Christian husbands and wives are brothers and sisters in the LORD. Matthew 18:15.
- 5.Reproofs are to be done GENTLY. Galatians 6:1.
- 6.If he disagrees with the reproof:
GIVE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES;
ASK HIM TO PRAYERFULLY CONSIDER WHAT SHE SAID
- 7.If he is an unbeliever:
MIND NOT SUBJECT TO GODS LAW-ROM. 8:7
IF HE SCOFFS... PROVERBS 9:8
- 8.If he does not graciously receive the reproof:
GOD WILL GIVE HER GRACE AT THAT TIME;
HER LOVE FOR GOD & HER HUSBAND WILL
OVERCOME HER FEAR 1 JOHN 4:18

E. Resource # 5 -- Respond biblically to foolish demands.

Matthew 7:24,26.

1. Definition of a foolish man: one who REJECTS GOD'S WORD AND DOES WHAT IS RIGHT IN HIS OWN EYES...
2. A husband is responding like a biblical fool when he: HARSH, UNREASONABLE DEMANDS; INTIMIDATES; MANIPULATES; HOSTILE TEASING; THREATENS
3. "Do not answer a fool according to his FOLLY, lest you be like him. Proverbs 26:4
4. Examples of foolish answers: ANGER, POUTING, CRYING, RUNNING AWAY, DEFENDING SELF, CLAMMING UP, VERBALLY ATTACKING HIM
5. "Give the fool the answer he DESERVES lest he be wise in his own eyes." Proverbs 26:4. In other words, give him an answer that will CONVICT him of his responsibility.
6. What to do in the "heat of battle". Pro. 15:28; Proverbs 18:13
7. What if the husband blames his wife for his sinful failures?
1 Corinthians 13:5; Ephesians 4:26; 6:13; Proverbs 13:10

F. Resource # 6 -- Seek godly counsel. Proverbs 12:15

1. Godly counsel is based only on God's WORD.
2. Guidelines for seeking counsel:
 - a. Counsel should be OBJECTIVE. Proverbs 18:17
 - b. Counsel should be directed at SOLVING the problem biblically using the Word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16; Proverbs 3:5,6
 - c. Counsel should be directed toward RESTORATION.
 - d. The wife must not SLANDER her husband when she seeks counsel from another. Proverbs 10:18
 - e. The wife should LIMIT the number of people that she tells of her husband's problem. Proverbs 11:14
 - f. The wife should FOLLOW the biblical admonition that older women are to teach younger women. Titus 2:2,3
 - g. Often ELDERS (or DEACONS) of a church may be the best source of biblical counsel. 2 Timothy 4:2
 - h. If you desire to seek a biblical counselor, one dependable association that certifies biblical counselors is the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC)
www.biblicalcounseling.com

G. Resource # 7 -- Church Discipline, Matthew 18:15

- 1.Step One: GO TO HIM PRIVATELY
- 2.Step Two: TAKE 2 OR MORE WITNESSES
- 3.Step Three: CHURCH DISCIPLINE

H. Resource # 8 -- Involve the Governing Authorities, Ro. 13:1

- 1.The governing authorities include: POLICE, COURTS, DEPT. OF FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES
- 2.What if her husband retaliates? 1 Peter 2:21-23; 1 John 4:18
CALL ELDERS (& POLICE, IF NECESSARY)

I .Summary

A Christian wife must take full ADVANTAGE of all the biblical measures God has provided her in His Word.

To do otherwise is FOOLISH and shows the wife's own unwillingness to obey or her ignorance of God's Word.

The more she obeys, the more she is PROTECTED by God and the better she can biblically and respectfully submit to her husband and the more likely he is to repent.

IV. Fearful/Proud Thoughts compared to God-Honoring Biblical Thoughts

Fearful/Proud Thoughts	God-Honoring Biblical Thoughts
"What if he leaves me?"	"If he leaves me, it will be very hard, but God will give me the grace to bear up under it." 1 Cor. 10:13
"He will never change."	"God <i>can</i> certainly change him. God can grant him repentance and faith. I will pray for my husband's repentance. " 2 Timothy 2:24-26
"I cannot take it anymore!"	"It feels like I cannot take it anymore, but that is not true. God will not allow me to be tempted beyond what I can bear."1 Cor.10:13
"He does not love me."	"Perhaps he does not love me as he should, but he can learn to love me

	<p>as Christ loved the church. Meanwhile, I can show love to him whether he returns that love or not.” Matthew 22:36-40</p>
“I hate him for what he has done to me and our family.”	<p>“I have sorrow because of God’s reputation. I am reminded that God Himself is kind to the ungrateful and evil. God is merciful and I am to be like God. Luke 6:35-36</p>
“I guess I’m not good enough for him.”	<p>“Actually God tells me that I am to be a blessing to my husband. By God’s grace, I can be the best thing my husband has going for him on this earth! Lord help me to consider my husband as more significant than myself.” Phil. 2:3; Pro. 18:22</p>
“He will see what it is like when I am gone.”	<p>“Lord, help me to have pity on him and not wish ill-will. I know that vengeance is Yours.” Col. 3:12-14; Romans 12:17-21</p>
“How could he do that to me?”	<p>“I should not be surprised at his sin considering the depth of my own sin. This is his sin. It is difficult to not take it personally, but actually it would not matter who he was married to. I will pray for his repentance.” Romans 3:23; Ezek. 18:20</p>
“I would never do that to him.”	<p>“I am perfectly capable of doing something worse. It is only because of God’s kindness to me that I don’t. It is my pride that makes me be self- righteous.” James 4:6-9</p>
“Why did God allow this?”	<p>“God is testing me and I should not be surprised when a trial comes seemingly out of the blue. Lord, <i>thank You</i> that I am not going through this in vain. You have a high and holy purpose for this to bring my dross to the surface and test my</p>

	faith.” James 1:1-4
“This is more than I can bear.”	“Lord, I need Your grace to help me and Your mercy. This is a great time of need for me.” Hebrews 4:14-16
“Who will take care of me if he leaves me?”	“God promises to take care of me. I will look to Him and seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. Somehow, someday, God will help me.” Matthew 6:30-34
“He disgusts me.”	“He is my husband, the father of my children. I love him and, with God’s help, I will make it as easy as I can for him to repent.” Gals.6:1; Titus 2:4
“I won’t have sex with him.”	“I will ask the elders to require him to have a physical to rule out sexually transmitted diseases. Once it is safe, then I <i>will</i> obey the Lord and show love to my husband in this area.” 1 Cor. 7:1-6
“I gave him the best years of my life.”	“Lord, help me to set my mind on You and not myself. Thank You for this test.” Col.3:1-2; 1 Thes. 5:18
“If the church finds out, they won’t let him lead the music.”	“It is more important that the church remain pure and God’s reputation upheld than it is that my husband lead the music. God forbid that I would cover up for his sin and not expose it to the elders who need to know.” Ephesians 4:15-16; 5:11-12
“How could God do this to me after all I have done for Him?”	“God knows better than I do how I can best glorify Him. He is my potter and I am His clay. His great mercies are new every morning.” Romans 9:18-22; Lam. 3:21-25
“How in the world could anybody look at pornography?”	“Just because that does not tempt me, it is a sin that is common to man. I have other sins that do tempt me.” James 1:13-15

“My husband seems to be very sorrowful over his pornography sin and is making no provision for the flesh; but he doesn’t see any of the other sins that he commits that have nothing to do with pornography.”	“Being his ‘helper-suitable’ and ‘closest neighbor’, I will gently reprove him for the other sins. If he does not repent, then I will suggest that we go together to see one of the elders. Then the elder can tell both of us what we are doing wrong.” Hebrews 13:17-18
“My husband must think I am ugly or he would not be looking at pornography.”	“Actually he tells me that he is attracted to me. I will not judge his motive, but take him at his word.” 1 Cor.4:5

V. Further Resources

A. *Finally Free* by Heath Lambert (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan. 2013).

This book is excellent. The last chapter in the book is entitled “Help for Families and Friends of Men Struggling with Pornography.” In it, Lambert sympathizes with the wives and then deals with the wife’s emotions and says, “Be a wife, not a cop.” In other words, let someone else lead the accountability effort.

Often wives respond with anger and withdrawing. One particularly helpful sentence in *Finally Free* is, “You are not to blame for your husband’s sin, but neither is he responsible for yours.”ⁱⁱ Lambert ends that chapter with “moving forward with mercy and grace.”

B. *Heartbroken and Healing* by Mary Asher and Hannah Palmer (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2012).

This book is a real life story/Bible study for ladies who are seeking comfort from God in the wake of marital betrayal. The book takes you from your thoughts and emotions of “finding out” all the way to “opening your heart” to God and to your husband. It guides your journey from being “devastated and crushed” to loving God more and learning to love your husband more. Of course, not all situations end as well as Hannah’s, but until it becomes clear that the wife has biblical grounds for divorce, this book will help her honor God and show love to her husband.

ⁱ Peace, Martha; *The Excellent Wife* (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 1995).

ⁱⁱ Lambert, Heath; *Finally Free*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan. 2013), p.140 (in the manuscript).