

## An Open Letter to a Hurting Husband

There is hope for your marriage.

There is great hope! The Scriptures give this encouragement to you: Do not be discouraged, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God fights for you.<sup>1</sup>

God's heart is for you. He is for healing. God has obligated Himself to act on behalf of those who are in covenant with Him.

You are able to succeed powerfully as a husband. God has created your spirit for strength and for greatness. Regardless of your wife's behavior, you can excel as a husband through your commitment and devotion to her.

This success as a husband is rooted in your commitment to God. Your success as a husband has everything to do with your commitment to God; it is not based on your wife's reaction or behavior.

Marriage is not something you wrestle out with your wife; marriage is something you wrestle out with God, just as Jacob did at the Jabbok River: wrestle until you are able to submit to the blessing.

You succeed as a husband as you remember your pledge before God in the presence of witnesses to love this woman and to be faithful to her "till death do you part." You remember that you made a sacred vow; and by the enabling of the Spirit of God Himself, you stand with strength to fulfill that pledge. You commit to fulfill your solemn oath with honor and with integrity, regardless of the cost, because mighty men of God choose to act as God Himself acts. As bearers of His image, godly men uphold covenant promises as God does: with steadfast faithfulness, unintimidated by the threat of loss, and undeterred by the pain of sacrifice.

You succeed as a man of strength and greatness when you say to your wife:

*I am committed to you until the day I die.*

*I will be devoted to you and to you alone for the rest of my life. I have no "back-up" plans.*

*Even if you reject me, I will continue to be committed to your good as long as there is breath in me. To whatever extent that you will permit me, and as is appropriate, I will strive to bless you and to serve you.*

*I lay down my life in order to minister to you.*

*None of this is contingent upon anything you do. This is my unconditional pledge to you, offered in obedience to God.*

*Even if you should want me out of your life, I will, from the distance that you determine, continue to be committed to you alone and to serve you by my fervent prayers and by my undivided devotion.*

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 31:6, 8; Isaiah 41:10; Joshua 1:9, 23:10

You are able to do this as you recognize that the great need of your life is for God Himself. Know that He has promised personally to be your great Reward.<sup>2</sup> Like the apostle Paul, resolve to make knowing Christ the determined purpose of your life.<sup>3</sup> God desires to satisfy every longing of your heart, and He is able to satisfy you fully. He does not satisfy those who are looking elsewhere for satisfaction, but He does satisfy abundantly those who are passionate and hungry and desperate for Him and for Him alone. To those who commit themselves to belonging to Him exclusively, He satisfies supremely.

With Christ as your sustainer and as the satisfier of your life, you are able to stand with strength as a man and with success as a husband.

In the beginning, the earth was formless, empty, and dark. By the work of the Spirit of God and by the spoken word of God, God created new life--things of beauty and things of excellence. Your marriage may seem shattered, empty, and dark right now. As you yield to the Spirit of God, invite Him to hover over your own life and marriage. Ask God to give you His life-creating words as you, created in the image of God, speak words of commitment to your wife. As you speak God's powerful words of devoted faithfulness, God is able to create light and life and all that is "very good."

Even if your wife should reject this miracle of new creation in your relationship, it can be a wonderful reality in your own spirit and life.

In general, when a husband creates a solid foundation of relational security for his wife, she will meet him there and will work with him to build the relationship upon that foundation of commitment. It is that commitment to one another's good and to the relationship itself that gives strength to a marriage.

Beneath her hurt and beneath her expressions of rejection to you, your wife's heart is for you; and her longing is for the healing of your relationship.

"Love covers over a multitude of sins," and it is a man's "glory to overlook an offense."<sup>4</sup> Many past hurts and frustrations are resolved not by rehearsing the hurts or by reviewing the resentments but by renewing a firm commitment to the relationship, resolving that nothing trumps the relationship and that nothing can thwart the commitment to that relationship. Your wife may reject your offer of relationship, and may limit your expressions of service to her, but absolutely no one can deter your commitment to her. It is that commitment which glorifies you and which God honors.

As the man, you bear on your shoulders accountability for the relationship. The woman is responsible for her own choices, but as the one tasked with authority in the relationship, you are uniquely accountable for the relationship. When you provide a solid foundation of commitment, the woman is encouraged and enabled to commit on her part and to join in successful marriage-building. But if the man's offer of commitment is conditional, then the woman perceives this as thin ice rather than as firm footing for her spirit. The man has the God-given ability to meet the woman's core need for relational security. The wife looks to the man to provide this first; it is his glory to do so, and it is his greatest success to continue to do so.

Tami Myer  
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<sup>2</sup> Genesis 15:1

<sup>3</sup> Philippians 3:8

<sup>4</sup> 1 Peter 4:8; Proverbs 19:11