

# Secrets of Pink:

## God's Design of Women

One of the most beautiful things in all the universe is God's design of women. Women were masterfully designed to reflect the character and nature of God, the One who is Himself breathtakingly gorgeous. God's design for women is not only one of beauty, but also one of strength and honor. And this is true not only of God's design of women, but also of His design for marriage.

I have not always thought that. Many years ago, as I read some of the same Scriptures that we will be reading in a couple weeks, I felt very hurt. I felt stifled; I felt demeaned. "God," I thought, "how could You say that? How could You treat women like this? God, this really hurts my feelings!" Have you ever felt that way?

I am glad that I wrestled with God and held on for the blessing, just as Jacob did at the Jabbok River. If you have been angry at God—if you have felt betrayed by God—listen: Don't walk away from the One who loves you more than His own life, who loves you more than you do yourself. Instead, wrestle to find and to know the truth—God will meet you there.

Actually, that is not entirely accurate. I used to think that I was the one holding on to God, wrestling with Him for His blessing, but I have since learned that it is actually God who is trying to bless us and we are the ones not cooperating with Him. We are the ones struggling against Him because we don't trust that He is perfectly motivated by love toward us and that His heart is to bless us.

I was like a child struggling against the very one who has come to help her—like a drowning man frantically working against the one who has come to rescue him. However, if we will stop fighting against God, we will find that His strong arms are around us to love us, not to harm us.



God's design of women is like a gorgeous, fragrant bouquet of flowers. It has many colors and many delights. Today we are going to look at four of those lovely aspects.



## 1. Ezer

Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Our culture talks a lot about self-esteem, and we work very hard at trying to generate self-esteem. But we have been given intrinsic value. We have been given "God-esteem."<sup>1</sup> In all of creation, only people are created in the image of God, and this in itself renders women worthy of esteem and respect.

We're going to look at four ways in which we are made to be like God—four ways that we are to reflect God in our marriages.

Genesis 2:18: "The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'" And so God made a helper for Adam. AHHH! That word "helper" was one of those offensive things to me—that word "helper" was like fingernails scratching down chalkboard.

To me, it sounded like an adult saying to a preschooler, "You can be my little helper today. Now wouldn't you like that? You can hold the paper towels, if you are very careful, while I paint this grand masterpiece. Holding the paper towels is a very important job!"

I do not want to hold the paper towels; I want to be the artist! I don't want to be a little helper; I want to be creating. I do not want to be a mindless spectator; I want to be fully engaged.

The Hebrew word for "helper" is *ezer*. After I studied this word, I never again felt belittled by it. I will tell you what I learned, but first I must warn you:

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<sup>1</sup> Breaking Free from a Negative Self-Image. Linda Mintle, PhD. Siloam. 2002.

You can become so impressed by the significance and honor of being *ezer*, once you learn what it really is, that you may walk away, not feeling demeaned, but instead feeling arrogant! Many women have fallen into that trap of feeling superior, which comes from a lie just as much as the other pitfall of feeling inferior.

The word *ezer* is used 22 times in the Old Testament. Here in Genesis, it is used twice to refer to the woman. But elsewhere, it is used to refer to God! *Ezer* denotes strength; in fact, it is translated as "strength" in Psalm 89.

Here is how *ezer* is used elsewhere in Scriptures:

- Deuteronomy 33:29 "Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord? He is your shield and *ezer* and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cower before you, and you will trample down their high places."
- Psalm 70:5 "Yet I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my *ezer* and my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay."

Does being *ezer* sound demeaning? Not at all! We are called to bring strength to others. The predominant image is that of a powerful warrior.

God is our role-model for *ezer*: God who rescues His people when they cannot rescue themselves; God who fights on behalf of His people. God is our *ezer* who comes to us with His strength. He supplies to us what we cannot supply for ourselves. This is how we are to be *ezer* to our husbands.

Eve was not made to be Adam's "little helper" to do the little things that he didn't want to do. She was made to do what he could not do. Adam could not supply companionship to himself. He could not supply intimate friendship to himself.

God equips women to supply to their husbands what they are lacking. That is a noble thing; it is a sacred thing. No wonder the enemy tries to distort it in our eyes.

How do we serve as *ezer* to our husbands; how can we supply what they cannot supply for themselves? We bring to them these critical things:

- companionship,
- close intimacy,
- confidence, and
- confirmation of their masculinity.

And God wants us to be *ezer* to our husbands in the way that God is *ezer* to us: God does not fuss that we are bothering Him or imposing on Him; God does not scold us because we need help; God does not act burdened or irritated; God does not feel that He has better things to do.

It is remarkable to me that God delights in being *ezer* to us; He helps us eagerly. He supplies us His strength graciously and generously. How often is our help to our husbands given begrudgingly? We reflect God and fulfill our sacred design when we delight in being *ezer* to our husbands—that is, a supporting, supplying strength to them.

## 2. Eve

The second aspect of our design as women is found in Genesis 3:20: “Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.” It is in our design as women to be mothers. Again, our culture can shape us as women to respond to that statement with hisses and arched backs, hackles fully raised.

But just as *ezer* is really a design of strength and honor, so is our design as mothers. Eve means “life-giving.” We are like God in that we are givers of life. We were designed in both body and soul to be creative, nourishing life-givers. It is a sacred thing to be received with honor and to be embraced with gratitude and humility.

Whether we physically bear children or not, we are designed as life-givers. Even if we do give birth to children, that is usually just a season in our lives. But all of us as women are called to be life-givers wherever we are in life.

Wives have been given the sacred power to create life in the souls of their husbands. As wives communicate respect to their husbands, they breathe life into them, reflecting what God did at creation. Wives nurture the God-given greatness in their husbands.

Eve was not Adam’s mother, of course! As wives, we must not make that horrible mistake of acting as mother to our husbands—acting as one with authority, correcting and commanding. That is deathly to the marital relationship—not life-giving.

But as Eve, we are givers of life. We breathe gently on little flickering sparks and carefully nurture them into strong flames. Little sparks, threatened by doubt and fear, we encourage into blazing confidence and success. We stoke and fan into life faith and health and thriving spirits.

We speak life into others with our words—words of acceptance and affirmation and admiration. We nourish life through our encouragement and

praise. We nourish life when we forgive. We nurture life through our prayers and through our obedient acts of holiness.

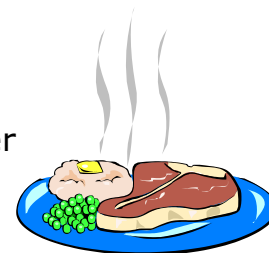
### 3. Fragrant

In The Message, Eugene Peterson paraphrases the first few verses of 1 Peter 3 like this: ". . . *Be good wives to your husbands, responsive to their needs. There are husbands who, indifferent as they are to any words about God, will be captivated by your life of holy beauty. What matters is not your outer appearance—the styling of your hair, the jewelry you wear, the cut of your clothes—but your inner disposition.*

*"Cultivate inner beauty, the gentle, gracious kind that God delights in. The holy women of old were beautiful before God that way, and were good, loyal wives to their husbands. Sarah, for instance, taking care of Abraham, would address him as 'my dear husband.' You'll be true daughters of Sarah if you do the same, unanxious and unintimidated."*

God has given to women the power of invitation and the fragrance of attraction. Imagine this: a man stands in the doorway of his son's bedroom. "Get to the table," he commands. "Now." Hearing the voice of authority, the boy walks downstairs to the dinner table.

Now imagine this same boy in his room the next day. His mother says nothing to him, but as the mouth-watering aroma of apple muffins and grilled steak and cherry cobbler reaches the boy's room, he runs downstairs, nearly tripping over himself in eagerness to get to the dinner table. That's the power of invitation, the fragrance of attraction.



God has designed women with the ability to create a pleasing fragrance in their lives. This fragrance stimulates desire and becomes an attractive invitation. The beauty of a holy woman creates a desire for God. The beauty of her holiness creates a compelling invitation into the beauty and holiness of God.

If a wife wants to effectively minister to her husband, she must understand this principle of attraction. What will draw her husband to God and to herself will be the fragrance of her invitation.

According to 1 Peter, God uses three characteristics to create a powerful attraction to Himself through women who are beautiful in these ways. These three things create a nearly irresistible invitation:



- a peaceful spirit--not one that is fretting or agitated--but one which calmly rests in trusting her God,
- a gentle spirit who handles the spirit of her husband as something fragile and very valuable, and
- a reverent spirit who communicates acceptance and who ministers unconditional respect to her husband's spirit.

This is the kind of beauty that makes God attractive to a man. We are to be magnets, not whips.

Women who are married can best minister to their husbands as they trust God's instructions to be the quiet but powerful influence of beautiful holiness in their husbands' lives.

#### 4. Feminine

Not only are we to be fragrant (inviting and having the attraction of holiness), but we are to be feminine.

Women in our culture have very little idea of the feminine, which is an attribute of God. God encompasses the characteristics of both the masculine and the feminine; together, masculinity and femininity more fully reflect His image.

To be feminine is not the same things as being female. Women in our culture know that they are female, and they flaunt that desperately and pathetically in ways which are demeaning and which invite abuse instead of tender cherishing. To be female only and not feminine is to be reduced to the level of an animal; such a woman is oblivious of her immortal spirit created in the image of Almighty God.



Without understanding what it is to be feminine, women cannot understand the design of marriage. To be feminine is to receive graciously, to welcome with acceptance and respect; it is to embrace with warmth. When others come into our presence, we receive them to our spirit with open arms.

Where do we see a picture of God displaying such qualities? Think of the father of the prodigal son. Those wide open arms--that receiving, accepting, warm embrace--that welcoming spirit is the heart of God.

As He looked lovingly at Jerusalem, Jesus used the analogy of a mother hen gathering her chicks beneath her wings. Those are certainly welcoming wings.

We have a God who graciously helps us. We have a God who gives us life. We have a God who invites us to Himself, and whose beauty attracts us to Him. We have a God who welcomes us with warm, open arms.

As women, we were made to be like God in these very ways.

