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Your WIFE Needs: YOUR HELP

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If [a homeschooling wife] falls down, [her husband] can help [her] up. But pity the [homeschooling mom] who falls and has no one to help [her] up!”

❖ ECCLESIASTES 4:9–10

WHAT I PICTURED when we decided to homeschool was a whole lot prettier than it actually is. I envisioned my children sitting quietly at wooden school desks while my wife taught them. They would start the day in prayer, read wonderful literature, and cut pumpkins out of orange construction paper.

With me as the principal (which meant that I didn't have to do anything), I'd be a respected figurehead and receive an occasional progress report. Most of the time, I would reign from my office.

At the end of each workday, I would return home to a spotless house, where my wife would stop in the midst of the home-cooked meal preparation to greet me. The children

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A really dumb question

would run to hug their old man, and I would sit around basking in the glory of the thought that “we” were preparing our children for the real world.

Then, reality hit. I realized that there was a lot of work for me, too! I thought it was “a wife thing” and that my life would stay pretty normal. Now I know that the only way to make it work is for it to be “a husband and wife thing.” And now it’s clear that my life is anything but normal.

ME, TEACH?

It’s not realistic to assume that every husband can help teach his children, but that doesn’t let you off the hook. There

Your Wife Needs: **YOUR HELP**

is no reason why you can't be involved in the teaching and training of your children. Remember, it's not just your wife's job.

There are certain subjects that are easier for you to teach than they are for your wife. In my house, I'm the creative one, and my wife is the methodical number cruncher. She doesn't like crafts, but I do. So I do a craft with the kids every once in a while. She likes English, literature, and math. She teaches those subjects since I can barely count with my fingers and toes.

You might like teaching history, Bible, or science. Whatever your gift is—use it. If you work an odd shift, offer to teach one morning a week or to take the kids on an educational outing. Grade papers, listen to kids read, help with science projects, drill with flashcards, or take a trip to the library.

NO PAIN, NO GAIN

Even if you aren't able to share the teaching responsibilities, you can help in other ways. These sting a little more, but they are just as helpful. Housework. Yeah, you read that right—housework. You know—vacuuming, dusting, straightening, or even doing dishes.

When you do the dishes, your wife doesn't have to. When you vacuum, your wife doesn't have to. When you give baths, she doesn't have to.

“Yeah, but, I won't have as much time to work out, watch sports, be involved at church, or restore my 1956 Corvette,” you argue.

Exactly. That's part of homeschooling. If you really believe in homeschooling, then you must be willing to make some sacrifices. Your wife does every day.

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DOING MY DUTY

I've taken it upon myself to help ease my wife's load. She didn't ask me, beg me, or threaten to quit if I didn't pitch in. I'm committed to what we're doing, and I want to prove it. One of the areas in which I've chosen to concentrate my efforts is the homeschool room. It's in our attic, and every day by the time school is over, it looks as if a tornado swept through.

I realized that it would be helpful to my wife to start each school day with a clean schoolroom. My plan was to have the kids and me straighten it up every night before going to bed.

In theory, it was a simple and relatively pain-free way to show my dedication to homeschooling. In reality, it's just plain hard work. I've climbed those steps many times and prayed, "Dear God, please let it be mostly clean."

I'm not sure that He has ever answered that prayer.

But I keep praying, and I keep cleaning.

WANT TO HEAR A SECRET?

Dad, here's a secret. I hate straightening up the homeschool room. I hate doing the dishes. I'd much rather be doing what I want to do than to be giving our kids baths and cleaning up the family room.

But, I am committed to homeschooling, and I love my wife. I know that if she is to do most of what homeschooling involves, then I'm going to have to do some things that I hate doing. In fact, in some twisted way, I am glad to do them, because I know I'm helping her.

It's true—I won't be able to do all that I want to do. I won't be able to have abs of steel, a golf score that would make Tiger Woods jealous, or watch every ballgame during the

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season, but that's the choice I made when we started this adventure. Sacrifice leads to successful homeschooling in the long run.

So, put aside the newspaper, turn off the TV, roll up your sleeves, and get to work.

NO PARADES

Here's one last helpful hint: Don't expect any parades. What I mean by that is, don't expect your wife to jump up and down every time you do a little housework.



Bill was setting himself up for a disappointment.

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I confess that was the reason behind some of my “do gooding.” I did the dishes, and then when my wife failed to acknowledge the job, I said something like, “Hey, I took it upon myself to do the dishes . . . I hope it’s all right.”

When she failed to praise me for my selfless giving, I was a little more straightforward (and mean). “You’re welcome for doing the dishes,” I said.

She looked at me, having cleaned the kitchen a thousand times without any acknowledgment, and said with a smile, “Don’t expect any parades.”

So, Dad, when you ease the burden from your beloved bride’s shoulders, don’t expect a celebration in your honor.

Twenty practical ways you can help your wife:

1. run errands
2. go to the grocery store
3. do laundry
4. dust
5. clean tubs and showers
6. give baths
7. wash dishes
8. replace burned-out lightbulbs
9. balance the checkbook
10. make sure her car is gassed up
11. answer the phone
12. get up in the middle of the night to meet the needs of a child
13. pay bills

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- 14.** pick up the kids and the dry cleaning
- 15.** take the responsibility for any problems
(car/utilities/repairs)
- 16.** do the banking
- 17.** straighten up the house at the end of the day
- 18.** get breakfast for the kids
- 19.** empty the dishwasher
- 20.** read to the kids