



THE GAME PLAN

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BECOMING A SPIRITUAL LEADER

God designed marriage as a beautiful picture of Christ's relationship with His bride, the church. Just as Jesus is the spiritual leader of His bride, so should you be with your wife. In the surveys I collected from women, desiring the husband to be the spiritual leader of the home was one of the most common responses. When a man leads his home under God's direction, He becomes like Jesus to his family. He's not a larger-than-life dictator but rather a gentle, loving, wise leader. When a husband becomes a leader who models Jesus' character, a woman's heart feels safe enough to submit to that leadership. In this God-designed picture the husband and wife mutually complete one another, giving a beautiful picture of the oneness God intended for marriage.

Learning to love one another and meet each other's needs is important, because it strengthens a couple's relationship and allows them to remain true to their commitment. More important than strengthening the relationship with one another is keeping the covenant they made before God. As the husband and wife grow closer to God as individuals, God will more closely knit their hearts together. They will learn to love unconditionally and serve sacrificially as Jesus modeled in giving His life for His bride.

Never have I seen a more beautiful picture of this than in



a letter I read written by Dr. Robert McQuilken. This letter served as his resignation from his position of president of Columbia Bible College. He wrote:

My dear wife, Muriel, has been in failing mental health for about eight years. So far I have been able to carry both her ever-growing needs and my leadership responsibilities at CBC. But recently it has become apparent that Muriel is contented most of the time she is with me and almost none of the time I am away from her. It is not just “discontent.” She is filled with fear—even terror—that she has lost me and goes in search for me when I leave home. So it is clear to me that she needs me now, full time.

Perhaps it would help you to understand if I shared with you what I shared at the time of my resignation in chapel. The decision was made, in a way, forty-two years ago when I promised to care for Muriel “in sickness and health . . . till death do us part.” So, as I told the students and faculty, as a man of my word, integrity had something to do with it. But so does fairness. She has cared for me fully and sacrificially all these years; if I cared for her the next forty years I would not be out of debt. Duty, however, can be grim and stoic. But there is more; I love Muriel. She is a delight to me—her childlike dependence and confidence in me, her warm love, occasional flashes of wit I used to relish so, her happy spirit and tough resilience in the face of her continual distressing frustration. I do not

have to care for her; I get to! It is a high honor to care for so wonderful a person.¹



You may never have to care for the physical well-being of your wife as Dr. McQuilken described, but your wife needs to know that if you had to, you would do it with the same joy and integrity described above. More than caring for her physically, your wife needs to see you caring for your family's spiritual needs, as well. When a woman sees her husband daily submitting to God, reading his Bible, praying, and walking in a close personal relationship with Jesus, it is much easier for her to give him the respect he needs.

What I love about Dr. McQuilken's letter is it's written by a man who walks closely with Jesus and seeks to model his Master's character. When Muriel reached out for her husband's hand in times of terror and confusion, he became Jesus to her. His hands were tender, his words compassionate, his eyes full of love, and his heart full of joy. When your wife reaches out to take your hand, what does she feel in your touch? What does she hear from your lips? What does she see in your eyes? What does she know is in your heart? How can you be Jesus to her?

The amazing thing about being your wife's spiritual leader is not what you get from this position but what you have the privilege to give. Your wife needs your prayers, your wise counsel, your strength, and your courage. Penny from Decatur



explained in her survey response: “Every husband needs to know that he is his family’s spiritual umbrella, and that his wife and children are safest when they are underneath it.”

Her comment reflects a biblical concept. Psalm 1:1–3 says, “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.” Imagine your role as spiritual leader like that tree. You provide shelter during the storms of life. You are firmly planted so your wife can lean on you when she gets weary. You yield the fruits of the Spirit because you draw your nourishment from God’s Word. You are steadfast and your leaves do not wither. Best of all you stand tall for God, and when your wife looks at you, it makes her desire to walk even closer in her own relationship with Jesus.

My husband, Art, has become a wonderful spiritual leader for our home. He faithfully prays for us, spends time with God, and has a contagious joyful spirit. One of the best things he does every night on his way home from work is to make a mental stop at his treasure tree. It’s not a real tree but rather a point along the way home where he hangs all the troubles from his day. After dropping off his frustrations, setbacks, and stresses, he takes time to receive an extra dose of the fruits of the Spirit. Soon he’s overflowing with these treasures and



ready for home. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are, after all, what every wife longs for in her spiritual leader.

HOME IMPROVEMENT—1. *On your way home from work tonight, find a treasure tree spot where you can exchange the frustrations from your day for an extra dose of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control.* 2. *Make visiting this tree part of your daily routine.*



THOUGHT FOR THE DAY—*The most important thing a husband can do for his wife is to seek the Lord with his whole heart and being. If he puts God first, God will give him the strength and desire to be an awesome husband.*

—AMY [DUNLOP]