

5 Questions You Should Ask When Your Husband Behaves Badly

Neither gender has a corner on bad behavior. Last week, we talked about wives behaving badly, but today is for the wife whose husband is behaving badly.

In the big picture, women have been under attack ever since Eve. The kingdom of darkness has often used men to perpetrate destruction and violence against women, seeking to destroy the life-giving and beautiful nature with which God endowed them.

But your response to your husband's behavior is unique. Most wives who experience a husband's bad behavior naturally respond in one of two ways:

- Passively wilting, putting up with his ongoing destructive actions and/or codependently trying to manipulate a change that never happens.
- Becoming aggressive, closing her heart, refusing true relationship, using his bad behavior as an excuse for her own destructive words and actions.

Both of these natural responses come from a victim mentality. Wounded people hurt other people; that's our sinful nature's default response. But as a growing maturing daughter of the King, you can do better than that! Your heavenly Father has equipped you with an amazing degree of resilience, wisdom, intuition and influence. He has something for you to do. Here's the question to ask:

Who is God calling you to be in this season of your marriage?

You may not know the answer to that question immediately. If

your husband is cheating on you, addicted to pornography or alcohol or erupting in anger physically or verbally, your safety may be in danger. Or perhaps he's seriously neglecting you and his responsibilities at home, controlling you emotionally or demanding or withholding sex as a weapon. What are you to do?

Here are four important steps any wife needs to pay attention to, especially if your husband is behaving badly.

1. Who is your source?

As humans, we naturally look to our closest relationship to meet our needs. But no one, including your husband, can meet all your needs. Looking to him will make you desperate, grasping, empty, angry, and/or disappointed.

Intentionally take steps to feed your soul what it needs. Connect regularly and deeply with other godly women in a small group, volunteer organization, church function or Bible study. Take in media such as books, podcasts, online resources and so on that inspire and uplift. Learn what helps you feel more alive, and make sure you are doing that often.

Most important, go to God as your most important source. Only He can give you the validation and security you need most, and tell you who you truly are. Only He can understand you fully and be there 100 percent of the time. Only He can show you the big picture and give you the guidance and fulfillment you will starve without. When you feel empty, seek Him first for where to go to get filled up.

2. How does God see your situation?

Specifically ask God to show you His perspective on your husband, your marriage and your own character. Is your husband basically a person of good will who has some horribly irritating behaviors? Does he truly care but is struggling with serious wounds of his own? Is he acting out of an evil

heart, resolutely refusing to take responsibility or to work toward positive change? Every single husband has caused and will cause his wife pain, but your husband's true intentions do make a difference.

A husband who struggles to communicate and seems oblivious to your needs may be hard to live with, but he is in a different category from one who justifies his continuing sexual infidelity or who strikes out and confiscates your phone and keys in fits of violent anger. The truth is sometimes painful, but seeing your husband and your marriage as God sees them is the kind of truth that will set you free.

3. What is within your control?

You cannot change your husband. Hopefully you've learned that by now. Though you do have influence, his behavior is not within your control. But you can change you. What about your own behavior and character does God need to change? Your own faults do not excuse your husband's bad behavior! But God does hold you accountable for what He is calling *you* to do and be.

Especially for a believing wife married to an unbelieving husband, remember Paul's admonishment; "And if the woman has an unbelieving husband who consents to live with her, she should not divorce him" (1 Cor. 7:13). And, "If it is possible, as much as it depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). You're only responsible for "as far as depends on you."

Trying to assign a percentage of blame is counterproductive. Your job is to do whatever is within your power to do to be the wife God is calling you to be, and leave the results with God. Is your heart open? Are you being an inviting safe place for your husband to connect? Are you learning healthy forgiveness? Are you learning to communicate in a way your husband can hear you? Because some men only respond to their own pain (and not yours), are you stepping up in places where

God may be asking you to set healthy boundaries?

4. What action steps can you take now?

Don't play the victim! Don't crawl into your corner and nurse your wounds. And don't put up a hard shell, close your heart and determine to make it on your own. Those responses are understandable, but God is calling you to something higher, better, more glorious.

Seek God for the action steps you may need to take, however difficult. Perhaps the next step for you is gathering some emotional/spiritual nourishment so you can think clearly enough about the step after that. Perhaps you need to get your grubby hands off and allow God to deal with your husband. Perhaps you need to do some heart work in learning to love your husband the way God is calling you to. Perhaps you need to set some firm boundaries, refusing to accept your husband's destructive behavior and allowing him to accept some consequences.

And here's a fifth and final question:

5. Who is God calling you to be to your husband in this season of your marriage?

Take the time to prayerfully and thoughtfully consider that question. Get some help if you need to. God has a future for you, regardless of what happens in your marriage.

Your Turn: *Is your husband behaving badly? Have you played the victim by either wilting or getting hard and prickly? What are you going to do now? Leave a comment below.* {eoa}

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