

Help! My Husband Is an Intercessor!

“Could you come down out of the heavenlies long enough to give me a hand with this dirty laundry?”

Have you ever uttered those words in your home? Some wives have trouble pulling their husbands away from the TV set. Others struggle to keep them from bringing work home from the office. But a growing number of women these days are asking: “How do I deal with my husband, the intercessor?”

First, let me congratulate you women who are married to intercessors. Of all the ministries to which a man could be called, none is more important than the ministry of intercessory prayer. Thank God for men who are committed to intercede for the needs of others, for revival and for spiritual awakening in our world! These men give their families the priceless gift of prayer.

But let’s admit it: Having an intercessor for a husband can present its share of challenges.

Tools of the Trade

Communication in marriage is difficult for all couples at times. But understanding a spouse’s intercessory burden can be particularly trying.

“He’s too emotional” is a common complaint I hear from the wives of intercessors. These women are concerned that their husbands are frequently tearful, weepy or burdened—many times for no apparent reason! Actually, the men themselves may be worried about the same thing. Some male intercessors don’t understand intercessory travail and therefore resist the

assignment when it comes upon them—especially if they know their wives will think they're weak or strange.

Men have a natural inclination to present a strong, "macho" image to their families. But a posture of weakness before the Lord makes any intercessor effective. This challenge—remaining strong before their families and at the same time weak before God's throne—is difficult for some men.

The husband of one of our closest friends is an intercessor. For some time, he and his wife were both perplexed by what seemed to be his emotional instability. He was apt to burst into tears at the most inopportune moments. His tender heart had become an embarrassment to both of them.

I explained to them that just as wrenches are essential equipment for an auto mechanic, tears are the tools of an intercessor's trade. "Tears are a language God understands," Dottie Rambo's song declares.

And Scripture promises: "He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing" (Psalms 126:6, NKJV). When tears have watered the soil into which the seeds of prayer are planted, we can expect a harvest!

It is true that male intercessors, like their female counterparts, are often preoccupied with spiritual things. They seem to be always stuck in the prayer room—if not physically, then mentally. At times they may seem out of touch with reality and so committed to prayer that they are oblivious to the everyday needs of their families.

The call to intercession, however, is not a measure of spiritual maturity. Intercession is an assignment from the Lord, like any other assignment. Intercessors need to grow in wisdom and discernment, just like the rest of us—and wives of intercessors need to be patient and prayerful in that process.

In extreme cases, a prayer warrior may refuse to hold a job or provide for his family, using his call to intercessory prayer as an excuse. But a mature, godly man knows that his spiritual responsibilities do not release him from his physical responsibilities.

Paul wrote that a man who fails to provide for his own family is “worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8, KJV.) If God calls a man to pray instead of holding an outside job, God’s provision for his family will be the evidence. In other words, God’s provision usually confirms God’s direction.

Some male intercessors are impulsive. They “get a word from God” and act on it immediately. But to assume that they have heard God clearly, have correctly interpreted what they heard Him say and are applying it rightly is presumptuous! With that tough-guy, John Wayne mentality, they overlook the fact that, at best, “we prophesy in see through a glass, darkly” (1 Cor. 13:9,12).

Refusing to wait for the Lord to confirm the word or for their wives to come into agreement actually breeds marital resentment. It doesn’t take much of a man to win an argument or walk all over his wife’s feelings. It takes quite a man to trust God!

It is crucial that male intercessors allow their wives time to process and participate in important decisions. As Ephesians 5:21 says, we must submit to one another.

A Lesson I Learned

In 1979 my family was living comfortably in a nice house on a beautiful lake in North Texas. The occasional concert or revival meeting paid the bills. Only nine months after moving into our new home, however, I was offered a job in Houston, Texas, as the executive director of an evangelistic association.

I felt strongly that God wanted me to take the job. To my surprise, Alice felt just as strongly that He didn't.

I knew there was no use trying to "railroad" her. I had to act from a position of truth.

According to the Word, Alice and I are one. We are to be of one mind—especially regarding something as important as selling a house and moving to another city. And that one mind is to be the mind of Christ.

"Honey," I told her sweetly, "I really believe that the Lord is calling us to this new position. However, it's clear to me that you disagree. So here's what I'm going to do.

"First, tomorrow I will call the ministry in Houston and explain to them that we are unable to accept the job at this time and that more prayer is needed for us to come to a decision. Second, I will not mention this offer to you again. I'm not going to bug you with this.

"Finally, I'm going to trust the whole situation to the Lord. If God has spoken this to me, He can just as easily communicate it to you. And if and when He does, you let me know."

Understand, I knew I could be wrong. Perhaps the job wasn't God's will. God has often used Alice to keep me from making stupid mistakes. At the same time, it could be that she was wrong.

What if, while waiting for Alice's agreement, someone else got the job and I missed God's plan for my life? Was I confident in God's ability to speak to my wife—confident that I could leave this issue in His hands until He had finished working out all the details?

It wasn't easy, but I kept my word not to mention the job again. I was determined not to whine about it, and I refused

to say, "If it weren't for you, I could be doing God's will right now!"

Late one night about six months later, Alice came into my study wiping tears from her eyes.

"Eddie," she said, "The Lord has told me that you are to take that job in Houston."

"Oh, Alice, I'm certain that the job was taken by someone else long ago," I replied.

"No, the Lord told me that it is there for you," she said. "Call them tomorrow, and you'll see."

The next morning I called the ministry in Houston and learned that the position, amazingly, had not yet been filled. I also learned that the night before, at the same time Alice had heard from the Lord, the ministry leaders were in prayer, asking God to confirm His will in our hearts.

I accepted the job offer, and we moved. The pay, the housing—literally everything about the job—was better because we had waited those six months. That experience proved to me that Alice and I *can* submit to each other in the fear of the Lord—because we have a faithful God!

Being a Helpmate

How can you support your husband in his ministry of intercession? Here are some ways to start:

* *Avoid the urge to judge or criticize him.* Intercession is a difficult job. It is a heavy responsibility to represent life-and-death issues before God's throne. Don't become an additional burden to him. Be a help, not a hindrance.

* *Find ways to assist him.* Perhaps you can offer to assist more with the administration of the family. I'm not suggesting that you replace him. Nevertheless, there may be ways you can

help him when you sense he is under a particular spiritual burden or when he is fasting.

* *Guard your heart against jealousy.* Don't be jealous of his relationship with Christ. If you don't experience the same level of intimacy with the Lord that your husband shares in intercession, that's OK. Thank God we are all different!

Pursue your own intimate relationship with Christ. Find your own rhythm of prayer. After all, intimacy with Jesus is a journey, not a destination; learn to accept yourself and where you are on the journey.

* *Release him to learn.* Today there are many opportunities for your husband to learn from other intercessors and teachers. Conferences, seminars and books offer a wealth of necessary training for him. Your generosity in allowing your spouse to learn from others will have far-reaching effects in the kingdom.

Remember, the fruit of your husband's prayers and tears—measured in transformed lives—will be applied to your heavenly account as well. Why? You're partnered with him so he can be a more effective minister of intercession.

Your praying husband is a precious gift, not only to you and your family, but also to the church. Understand him. Help him. Pray for him. And enjoy the blessings of your ministry together.

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