

An Open Letter to Stormie Omartian

Dear Stormie Omartian,

I have just read your book, "The Power of the Praying Wife" and I felt I must write to share my horror at the message you are sending out with what you have written. Please do not mistake me as someone who would say this lightly. I read your previous book, the Power of the Praying Parent, and found parts of it extremely helpful when I was going through a terrible time in my life.

I would like to share a bit more about that time with you, as I hope it will give you some background into my concerns with your book. It was 6 years ago, almost exactly and I was living in a hospital with my 2 and a half year old daughter and three month premature baby son. My son's prematurity was caused by an assault from my husband, who had abused me sexually, emotionally, psychologically, socially, financially and sometimes physically for four years. I come from a Christian family and have been committed to God my whole life, although this commitment was almost completely destroyed by my husband's satanic and evil attempts to destroy everything I was. In a nutshell, that was where my life was when I was given your book, the Power of the Praying Parent. It was a great comfort to find practical ways of praying for my children, especially my son, in a situation where I could do nothing else, but watch as his life swung between life and death on an hourly basis. So I thank you for the help you gave through you authorship of that book.

What has concerned me so greatly about the book I have just read, the Power of the Praying Wife, is that if I had been given that book 6 years ago, I would have invariably returned to my husband and would be dead now. I would like you to understand that, I am not being dramatic or over-imaginative. If I had returned to my husband, I WOULD BE DEAD NOW.

Instead, I am very much alive! My son is a perfectly well nearly 6 year old and my daughter is a beautiful well adjusted 8 year old. I have gone through many hours of counselling and serious spiritual battle to get to the place where I am now: divorced from my first evil and abusive husband and married again to the most wonderful, Christian man who loves, cherishes and respects me with everything he does. I am healed and whole and restored because I was able to escape, unlike the many women every year killed by a partner or former partner.

I am not a one off case, please understand this. At least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime — with the abuser usually someone known to her. That would suggest a third of the women reading your book are also experiencing abuse similar to mine.

I feel it is important to share with you my specific problems with your book. I hope you will appreciate this is quite a long letter as I hope to list the many reasons your book would have led me to return to my abusive ex-husband and how throughout it perpetuates the values of abusive men and encourages women to accept and even embrace abusive behaviours. I will do this by going through the issues one by one. Thank you in advance for listening to what I have to say.

The Power

In the first chapter entitled "The Power" your first assumption is all women reading your book have some power that they are at liberty to give up to their husband.

Potentially a third of your readers will be abused and without power, to suggest they are to give up this power, is more than just a problem. It is an impossibility.

In your second page of this chapter you state, “A husband can hurt your feelings, be inconsiderate, uncaring, abusive, irritating or negligent. He can do or say things that pierce your heart like a sliver.”¹ At this point you have included abuse as a potential sin a husband is perpetrating against his wife, Abuse can never be tolerated and at no point do you validate the reality that this is wrong and that he should be held accountable for this sin. In fact I would say that in my position as a domestic abuse awareness trainer, all the behaviours you list could be described as abusive, if they are partnered with a desire to have power and control.

You go on to say that “Many difficult things that happen in a marriage relationship are actually part of the enemy’s plan set up for its demise”² At this point you seem to negate any personal responsibility on the part of the husband for his behaviour. I am not denying that the enemy isn’t involved in the situation, but it is only through personal responsibility for our choices that we can move forward. As Paul says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”³

You state that we can say “I will not allow anything to destroy my marriage”⁴ but if we live in a world of free will and our husband is choosing to abuse us, without stopping, we cannot stop him. In fact, by giving us free will God has stated that even He can’t stop our husband abusing us. If we could stop abuse by prayer alone, surely sex trafficking would no longer be a problem, when actually more and more girls and women are being trafficked and raped multiple times on a daily basis.

You state “You can submit to God in prayer whatever controls your husband – alcoholism, workaholic laziness, depression, infirmity, abusiveness, anxiety, fear or failure – and pray for him to be released from it.”⁵ This seems to suggest the abusive husband is the victim in this, he is being controlled by the abuse. As a professional domestic abuse trainer, I would like to clarify that abusive men control their victims, they are not controlled by their choice to abuse. They abuse because they want to and because they can. The only way a man will stop abusing is if he accepts 100% responsibility for his behaviour, maintains regular accountability and develops compassion and empathy.

You go on to mention “God’s position on divorce”⁶ using the verse from Malachi, “God hates divorce”⁷ to suggest that God is against divorce and we are “grieving him” if we do divorce our husband. I feel you are offering a rather simplistic understanding of this passage and God’s word as a whole when you say this. I would suggest that the reason the passage says God hates divorce is because He Himself went through the pain of divorce in His marriage to Israel. He had to abandon His beloved due to their inability to love Him and recognise the great love He had for them. You have said you did not want to grieve God by divorcing your husband, but what about how your husband had been grieving God by his treatment of you. What about God’s

¹ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 16

² Ibid.

³ 2 Corinthians 5:10

⁴ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 16

⁵ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 17

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Malachi 2:16

love for you and His desire for you to be everything you can be? In fact to abused women, you are saying here, “your life is less valuable than your marriage.” When satan tempts Jesus in the desert, he says, “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here.”⁸ Jesus’ response is, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”⁹ We are asking women to put God to the test when we do not see the terrible danger they are in and help them to safety. Maintaining separation and divorcing an abusive man is nothing short of heroic for many women and we need to celebrate their victory, as God does , rather than condemn them with individual verses taken out of context.

You go on to describe your husband’s behaviour in a way I would define as abusive, “The biggest problem I faced in our marriage was my husband’s temper...He used weapons that left me crippled or paralysed.”¹⁰ At this point I would point out to you that he chose to do this and nothing you did caused him to. You were too valuable to be treated this way. You seem not to acknowledge this and rather blame yourself for his behaviour, “I’m not saying I wasn’t at fault – quite the contrary. I was sure I was as much to blame as he, but I didn’t know what to do about it.”¹¹

If I had read your words six years ago, it would have convinced me my husband was right, I was responsible for the abuse. It was my fault and it was up to me to go back to him and change myself to make him able to treat me well. I now know that is the ultimate lie abusive men tell. It makes us believe we have some power, that we can change things. And yet we have no power, it is an illusion and it keeps us trapped, unable and unwilling to believe someone is choosing to treat us in this way

You say that when you got to the end of your tether with your situation, “...because I came to God in total honesty about what I felt, He allowed me to thoroughly and clearly envision what life would be like if I left Where would I live, how would I support myself and care for the children who would still be my friends, and worst of all, how would a heritage of divorce affect my son and daughter.”¹²

I have not read a more clear description of how I felt when I was living in a hospital with my children. Completely hopeless, knowing I would be seen as a failure, losing all that was important to me and most of all letting my children grow up without a father. It was a terrible picture that I saw. But in my case God did not show me it. It was the devil, trying to convince me back to an evil, life draining existence where my children could go on to be emotionally and potentially sexually or physically abused. You have described the feelings every woman I know who has experienced abuse has gone through, and for many these feelings lead to them going back to their abusive husband, where they and their children are being continually abused. There are worse things for children than a heritage of divorce, ask any child who has witnessed their mother being beaten or belittled.

You felt God was calling you to stay and I am not denying that God may have said that. It breaks my heart however that women who read your book will go back to a life of abuse rather than a life of freedom after reading your words.

You go on to talk about the results you saw as you began to pray, you say, “Little by little, I began to see changes occur in both of us. When Michael became angry,

⁸ Luke 4:9

⁹ Luke 4:12

¹⁰ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 18

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

instead of reacting negatively, I prayed for him.”¹³ Although I don’t doubt God’s transforming power, I find it interesting that your husband’s change related to your changed response to him. For some men who want to control, as long as things go their way, their behaviour is much more acceptable, obviously this is not the case with many perpetrators, but if every time I behaved unacceptably people adapted their behaviour, I would probably be nicer to be around, not because I had changed but because people were pacifying me. It happens with 5 year olds, if you give them everything they want, they stop having tantrums, because they don’t need to.

Later in the chapter you go on to say “You have to decide if you want your marriage to work, and if you want it badly enough to do whatever necessary within healthy parameters, to see it happen.”¹⁴ You seem to assume we all know what healthy parameters are. I would suggest that throughout the world you will find many different thoughts on what healthy parameters are. You have so far suggested you are as much to blame for your husband’s abuse as he is, that exposing children to abusive men is preferable to a legacy of divorce and that pacifying abusive men is a suitable way of enabling God to change them. I would consider all of those outside of healthy parameters.

You say that “A wife’s prayers for her husband have a far greater effect on him than anyone else’s...”¹⁵ but then go on to say that, “... I’m not convinced we should depend on our husbands to be the sole providers of [prayer] the best thing for our marriage was for me to have women prayer partners with whom I pray every week.”¹⁶ It appears from your words that a wife’s prayers are the most effective, but a husband’s are less effective than having prayer partners.

His Wife

Now moving onto the second chapter, “His Wife”, in which you begin by saying, “[You must] maintain a pure heart. It must be clean before God in order for you to see good results.”¹⁷ This makes me feel extremely uncomfortable; like prayer is some sort of formula, get the heart right and the blessing flows. But what about the many pure hearted people who never had their prayers answered, what about the children who pray that sexual abuse will stop and the thousands dying of aids who pray they will be healed, who continue to suffer and die. Where does the formula go then? It is interesting that Jesus answered the rebel’s prayer on the cross when he had not maintained a pure heart: “‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise.’”¹⁸

You go on to say, “This whole requirement [of a pure heart] is especially hard when you feel your husband has sinned against you with unkindness, lack of respect, indifference, irresponsibility, infidelity, abandonment, cruelty or abuse. But God considers the sins of un-forgiveness, anger, hatred, self-pity, lovelessness or revenge to be just as bad as any others”¹⁹ I would like to point out that you start by invalidating the truth of this pain by saying “when you *feel* your husband has...”, you seem to be suggesting he may not actually have done these things, it is just our perception of what he has done.

¹³ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 19

¹⁴ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 21

¹⁵ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 19

¹⁶ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 23

¹⁷ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 26

¹⁸ Luke 23:42-43

¹⁹ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 28

Where is your understanding of a God of justice here? You do not at any point condemn the behaviours you have listed or validate those of us who have been treated in those ways. In fact you seem to only condemn the response to those behaviours. Also, please could you explain how we are to forgive when the abuse continues, Jesus said, "For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build, and was not able to finish.'"²⁰ The cost of forgiveness is great and requires us to truly feel the pain of what has been done to us. The ability to do this in an abusive environment is impossible. When we are being abused we are in survival mode and do not feel the true pain of what is happening. Forgiveness is not an act of consciously forgetting what has happened, this is actually denial, which involves being dishonest to ourselves and others, something unlikely to be supported by the Spirit of Truth Jesus talks of, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth..."²¹

You talk about it being painful for us to die to ourselves in our marriages, "...this kind of pain leads to *life*. The other alternative is just as painful and its ultimate end is the death of a dream, a relationship, a marriage and a family."²² I would beg to differ, for some women staying in their marriage will lead to ACTUAL death, not metaphorical death, not relationship death, actual real death and for some of the women, their death will be the first time they have experienced peace in a long, long time.

At this point you may be about to point me to your one sentence on safety in the book, "(In fact, if you are in any kind of physical or emotional danger, remove yourself immediately from the situation to a place of safety and get help. You can pray from there while your husband receives the counselling he needs)"²³ This bracketed sentence is your one and only attempt at ensuring safety for those reading your book, when statistically at least 25% of those reading it will be experiencing physical abuse. As a qualified and trained professional in domestic abuse issues I would like to state that this is NOT enough. You have already listed abuse at least three times as a thing a husband can be "released" from if the wife is willing to pray and be changed for him. I would also say, as someone who has experienced physical and emotional abuse, I would not have defined myself as emotionally or physically abused. Most of us women who have experienced it think it is unique to us and in order to survive in an abusive situation, we will minimise the abuse and our level of danger, as will our husband. He will say that he 'only' slapped us or 'just' broke our leg and we will believe it really is unimportant. The sentence you have written is unlikely to enable any woman whose husband is assaulting her to recognise herself in it. Especially with all you have said previously about it being our fault too, and that we must change to enable our husbands to change.

Later in this chapter you talk of Queen Esther as an example of a truly godly wife. You describe how she did not, "...run in and scream, 'Your hoodlum friends are going to ruin our lives.'" Rather she prayed first and ministered to him in love, while God prepared his heart."²⁴ I would like to challenge your idea of Esther as a loving wife. In reality she was a sexual slave procured by the king to satisfy his desires. Her waiting was not about love, it was about absolute fear; if she approached him and he refused her, she would die. Rather than using Esther as an example of a loving wife,

²⁰ Luke 14:28-29

²¹ John 16:13

²² Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 29

²³ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 29-30

²⁴ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 35

she is more suited to the description of a courageous woman, willing to be martyred if there was a possibility it would save her people.

Further through this chapter you begin to look at creating a home. You state at the offset of this section, "I don't care how liberated you are, when you are married there will always be two areas that will ultimately be your responsibility: home and children"²⁵ You may be under the impression this is true, but in fact this is a complete lie and is based on nothing more than your own personal situation. I am married to a wonderful Christian man, who is a full time stay at home dad who does the majority of the housework and child-care activities. I do not in anyway feel more responsible for those areas than him, however I endeavour to share responsibility with him for our house and children. I am the only financial provider in the house and my husband and I are truly able to live out these roles, without the world collapsing or our children being scarred for life.

You go on to say, "Even if you are the only one working...you will still be expected to see that the heart of your home is a peaceful sanctuary...you will also be expected to be sexually appealing, a good cook, a great mother, and physically, emotionally, and spiritually fit. It's overwhelming to most women, but the good news is that you don't have to do it on your own. You can seek God's help."²⁶ As I read this again, I am shocked at your lack of understanding. The reason that it is overwhelming to women is because it is completely unacceptable and no person, male or female, should be continually pushed to achieve the unattainable. We do not need God's help to do everything you have listed, because we are worth too much to have unrealistic expectations thrown at us at every turn.

These expectations are continued as you say, "My husband may not look in the cupboard for a light bulb or a battery for months. But when he does, he wants it to be there. Nor does he want to come home late from work one night and find there is no bread for a sandwich."²⁷ My question to you is, why can't he buy batteries, light bulbs or bread for himself? He is a grown man and capable of doing these things for himself, just as we are capable of doing things for ourselves.

You go on to say, "Part of making a house a home is allowing your husband to be the head so you can be the heart. Trying to be both is just too much. God placed the husband as the head over the family, whether he deserves it or not and whether he rises up to take his position or not. It's God's order of things."²⁸ How can you say this?

Look at what happened with Deborah, "And I will call out Sisera, commander of Jabin's army, along with his chariots and warriors, to the Kishon River. There I will give you victory over him." Barak told her, "I will go, but only if you go with me." "Very well," she replied, "I will go with you. But you will receive no honour in this venture, for the LORD's victory over Sisera will be at the hands of a woman." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh."²⁹

And what about God's attitude to Saul? "But Samuel replied, 'What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice?

²⁵ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 38

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 39

²⁹ Judges 4:7-9

Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshipping idols. So because you have rejected the command of the LORD, he has rejected you as king.³⁰

God does not give rights without responsibilities. Those who do not uphold the position God gives them do not maintain that position. When Barak would not lead, Deborah took over from his authority. When Saul dishonoured his position, God removed it and gave it to David. Men who abuse or dishonour their wives, do not maintain their place as head.

I would also say that you are misunderstanding what it means to be the 'head'. It is not an authoritative word; it does not mean to be the chief over the home or the elder of the home. In fact, "...the emphasis of Ephesians 5 is not on the authority of husbands, but on their obligation to love their wives as they love themselves. In fact, the only mention of authority in marriage is found in 1 Corinthians 7:3-7, where Paul gives husbands and wives mutual authority over one another's bodies."³¹

You go on to talk of how we should let go of our expectations of our husbands. You use the following story to illustrate this, "...my husband called from work and said he wanted me to prepare a certain chicken dish for dinner. I went to the store got the food, prepared the dish, and when he came home, he walked in the door and said bluntly, 'I don't feel like chicken tonight, I want lamb chops.'...I realised it was healthier for both of us if I rearranged my expectations"³² I would like to clarify for you that this wasn't a case of too high expectations on behalf of yourself, it was a case of male privilege on behalf of your husband. He believed that you as his wife, was there to serve him and he could do what he liked. This is a form of domestic abuse. I would say to you and any other woman whose husband was behaving in such ways that you are worth far more than this. You are not a glorified slave, you are not a possession for your husband to use as he wishes, you are a human being, made in the image of Almighty God, and as such, you should expect more from him and should not allow him to devalue you in this way.

You say "It is interesting that God requires the husband to *love* his wife, but the wife is required to have *respect* for her husband...I assume no woman would marry a man she didn't love, but too often a wife loses respect for her husband after they've been married awhile."³³ Please do not assume women do not marry men they do not love. Throughout the world there are many girls and women sold into marriages with men they will never be able to love. The culture into which this verse speaks is one where women were bought and sold as possessions.

You go on to use Queen Esther as an example of this lack of respect. "All [the king] asked of [Queen Vashti] was that she put on her royal clothes, don her royal crown, and make a royal appearance for the people he was entertaining. She declined, knowing full well it would be humiliating for him...She not only wronged her husband, the king, but the people as well. Unless a wife wants to lose her position of queen of

³⁰ 1 Samuel 15:22-23

³¹ Mimi Haddad (<http://www.cbeinternational.org/?q=content/what-male-headship>)

³² Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 40-41

³³ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 42

her husband's heart, and hurt her family and friends besides, she mustn't humiliate her husband no matter how much she thinks he deserves it."³⁴

Let us clarify a few things here. It is believed that the king was asking Vashti to "to appear wearing *only* her royal crown." This theory is supported by the statements that the king was very drunk³⁵ when he made the demand for his wife to "show the people and the princes her beauty³⁶". Suddenly this changes the situation from Vashti being disobedient into her refusing to be sexually abused publically for the pleasure of the king. Rather than vilifying Vashti for her disobedience, we should be celebrating her heroic act of standing up to the king and his abusive ways. Far from modelling disobedience to the people of the land, as the king suggests; Vashti was standing up for her position as queen, much like Mordecai, later in the story, stands up against Haman, because of his commitment to God.³⁷

His Work

As you talk about a husband's work you state, "...a man's identity is very often caught up in his work. He needs to be appreciated and he needs to win, and his work is often a means of seeing both happen."³⁸ Rather than challenge this view, you use it to encourage women to pray for their husband's to find purpose. But this view must be challenged. It must not be acceptable for a man (or indeed a woman, as this is a human problem, not a male problem) to get their identity from their job. Our identity must first and foremost be found in God, and it is only when this happens, that we will be able to find our purpose.

His Sexuality

In this chapter of the book you make many factual statements that are in reality only assumptions and myths about men and women. You state that "...for a husband, sex is pure need. His eyes, ears, brain, and emotions get clouded if he doesn't have that release...there is a far greater chance of settling the other issues if sex comes first."³⁹ This is an assumption, it is not based on any biological fact. Men can concentrate and focus on things other than sex and to suggest otherwise is to do men a great disservice and push women into accepting sexual abuse in order to resolve issues.

You at no point in this chapter discuss rape. You do not mention that it is illegal, you do not explain that sexual abuse, violence, coercion or manipulation is wrong and instead you put all the responsibility on the woman for satisfying the man's needs, while enabling the man to do nothing to support or honour his wife.

You go on to say, "Sexual problems are quite common because many women don't have a clear grasp of what God's view is on the subject...Unless we're fasting or praying for weeks at a time, or are experiencing physical infirmity or separation there is no excuse not to engage in it regularly."⁴⁰ I would say most Christian women and men are very aware of this view and I would suggest that this is, in part, why 13% of

³⁴ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 43

³⁵ Esther 1:10

³⁶ Esther 1:11

³⁷ Esther 3:1-4

³⁸ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 50

³⁹ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 61

⁴⁰ Ibid.

American married women have experienced rape by the current husband,⁴¹ and why in the UK, the most common rapists are husbands, ex-husbands, or partners.⁴²

You go on to explain that God's perspective is that "...our body is to be used to comfort and complete the *other* person. Something is built up in the man and the marriage when this need is met by his wife."⁴³ You do not however state that the same is so for the wife when the husband, 'comforts and completes' her. You squash men's and women's sexualities very neatly into two boxes which do not fit the majority of people. What of the women that have higher sex drives than their husband, what of those men or women who have been sexually abused? It is very dangerous to use stereotypes as facts or to assume men and women are in fact biologically opposites. This is not the case. To not ask within your book why women are not interested in sex with their husbands is very dangerous. Maybe they have brokenness that needs healing, maybe their husband has raped them on a regular basis, maybe they need their husbands to give them love in other ways, before they feel able to give of themselves in a sexual way.

Your solution to sexual problems in the marriage are as follows, "When your husband communicates to you what he has in mind, as only a husband can do, don't roll your eyes and sigh deeply. Instead say, 'Okay, give me fifteen minutes'... During that time, do something to make yourself feel attractive...Comb your hair. Wash your face and prepare it with products that make your skin look dewy and fresh. Put on lip gloss and blush. Slip into lingerie you know he finds irresistible...While you're doing this, pray for God to give you renewed strength, vitality, and a good attitude. Hopefully, when you're ready, your husband will find you were worth the wait... He'll be happier and you'll both sleep better. This is a small investment of time to see great rewards in your marriage."⁴⁴ For many women, this advice is a push towards accepting sexual abuse, towards further unhappiness. Please do not say that we will sleep better as a result of this. Potentially we will sleep worse, much worse. I say this from a place of experiencing sexual abuse on a daily basis from my ex-husband.

You briefly mention the situation of a woman who is being sexually neglected by her husband, saying, "...if he is content to go month after month without sex, then something is wrong. If there is no physical problem hindering him, maybe he's having deep feelings of failure, disappointment...prayer can help reveal what the problem is and how to solve it. Get professional help if you need to."⁴⁵ I would like to know why this is your advice for a man struggling sexually, whereas your advice for a woman is just to get on with it and make the man happy.

Your parting thoughts in this chapter are this, "If you don't think highly enough of yourself to take care of your body, do it as an act of kindness for *him*."⁴⁶ This is yet another unacceptable comment. How is it right that a "fearfully and wonderfully made" creature of God should be advised by you to make effort with themselves 'in an act of kindness' to their husband? It is not! If any woman does not value themselves, this needs to be supported and the reasons for it considered and support given to enable her to move forward.

⁴¹ Basile, Kathleen C. (2002-10). "Prevalence of Wife Rape and Other Intimate Partner Sexual Coercion in a Nationally Representative Sample of Women".

⁴² Myhill and Allen, Rape and Sexual Assault of Women: Findings from the British Crime Survey

⁴³ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 62

⁴⁴ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 63

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 64

His Affection

You use an example of a couple named Patti and Tom to talk through the issues of a husband who is not affectionate. You explain how Tom was affectionate only during sex and at no other time and how Patti was finding this incredibly hard. As she prayed and submitted herself more to God, Patti became sure she deserved more affection and approached Tom, leading to transformation because of Patti's prayer. "Tom proceeded differently this time. He took his problems to his own prayer group of men, who instantly rallied around him. They decided to not only support him daily in prayer, but also to keep him accountable to show some form of affection to Patti each day."⁴⁷ This worked and Tom became affectionate and Patti became much happier.

Throughout your book you focus on the wife's prayers for her husband and the power they have, but in this situation it was the accountability of Tom's prayer group that enabled him to change. Why not have a wider focus in your book? Not only is accountability mentioned regularly in Proverbs (11:14, 15:22, 24:6, 27:17), Jesus makes it clear what we should do with believers who continually ignore the accountability of other Christians, "If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won't accept the church's decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector."⁴⁸

Why does your book not focus on this teaching at all? Why is the focus on the wife and her responsibility to bring about change? What about Jesus' teaching about those who are sinning taking responsibility, about those who are around that person not enabling them to continue with their sinful behaviour, but instead challenging it and being willing to provide consequences if necessary?

In this chapter you again box men and women with no factual basis to do so, "Affection isn't at the top of a man's priority list because men often see sex and affection as being the same. A woman's greatest need is for affection."⁴⁹ I can assure you my greatest need as a woman is not for affection, and my husband's greatest need is not for sex. I do not know many women or men who fit into the boxes you have given them and for those who do fit into the boxes you have given, this doesn't make their behaviour acceptable. When my husband and I first married, any time we had an argument, he would say the reason he had behaved in a certain way was 'because he was a man, and that's what men do.' I will not accept this. If it is because of who he is that is one thing, if it is because he is a man, it is as unchangeable as his genitals. If it is because of who he is, his history, background, experiences and personality, they do make him who he is, but they are changeable and if he loves me and I love him, we will work to change the parts of us which hurt the other, and with God's power working within both of us, we have done and will continue to.

His Temptations

In this chapter you address a man's 'temptations', you talk of a friend, "...whose husband had numerous affairs before they finally divorced. I questioned her choice

⁴⁷ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 68

⁴⁸ Matthew 18:15-17

⁴⁹ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 69

of 'friends' but I never questioned her godliness or commitment to pray."⁵⁰ It is interesting that you blame her friends, who I am not saying are blameless, but the constant factor is this woman's husband. It is important to understand that this is an abusive tactic, an abusive man will attempt and potentially succeed in seducing our friends. This not only means we lose any confidence we have, but also that we have no friends and are isolated from those who could have supported us. I know this to be true as my ex-husband regularly employed this tactic on my friends, some did say no, while others didn't. I do not absolve women who have relationships with married men of any responsibility, but I would not be surprised if your friend's husband was abusive. I recently spoke at a church where a woman spoke to me afterwards and disclosed that until I spoke about the abuse I had suffered, she had never realised that her nearly 40 years of marriage had been abusive and she wanted to cry, finally her pain and brokenness over all that time had been validated.

His Mind

In this chapter you talk of the attacks of the enemy on a man's mind, "I finally realised that all men have an enemy who wants to undermine what God desires to do in their lives. Women have that same enemy, but men seem to be more vulnerable to his attacks in certain areas."⁵¹ I feel you are undermining men's abilities to fight off the enemy and elevating women to a higher plane, where they are less likely to be unable to resist the enemy. This is blatantly untrue and is not in anyway factually based. It again reinforces the need for women to take responsibility for men, when men in fact need to take responsibility for their own lives.

His Fears

This chapter talks of praying for a man's fears. "Men are often susceptible to [fear] because without even realising it they get attacked by the 'what if's'. 'What if I can't make enough money?' 'What if something happens to my wife and children?' 'What if I get some terrible disease?' 'What if I'm overpowered or threatened?' 'What if I can't perform sexually?' 'What if no one respects me?'"⁵² I would suggest to you that this type of fear for men comes from the thing you call 'God's order of things'. While men are pushed into the man box of having to be in charge, earn the money, achieve, make the decisions, be the head, they will feel this fear, because your interpretation of the Bible means that men, without any capability to do so, are expected by God to be in authority, purely because they are the owner of a penis. I believe the best way to stop men having this type of fear is to challenge the theology and tradition which puts such high expectations onto men.

His Purpose

You write in this chapter of a praying for a man to find his purpose. Towards the end of the chapter you address the issue of a woman's purpose saying, "Whatever God has called your husband to be or do, He has also called you to support it and be a part of it...For some women this means creating a good home, raising the children, being there for him, and offering prayer support. Other women may take an active role by becoming a partner or helper. In either case, God does not ask you to deny you own personhood in the process, God has called *you* to something, too. But it will fit in with whatever your husband's calling is."⁵³ I know you are *saying* that God has a purpose for me, but the emphasis you give is that mine calling is secondary to my husband's. It is always going to be part of my husband's calling to raise the children and create a good home, in partnership with me. Sometimes it is the woman who is

⁵⁰ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 72

⁵¹ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 78

⁵² Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 82

⁵³ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 89

called first and the husband who is to support her, and although you do not condemn this, you do not mention it either.

His Choices

This chapter is about men's choices and how we need to pray for them to enable them to make better choices. You again make very stereotypical comments about men, "We have to remember that all men think they are doing the right thing. 'Every way of a man is right in his own eyes.' (Proverbs 21:2)"⁵⁴ I think you will find the word man in this verse is actually about men *and* women, "People may be right in their own eyes, but the LORD examines their heart."⁵⁵ This is not about men, we all like to think we are making right choices.

His Priorities

Yet again in this chapter you stereotype men, "Men have many different ideas about what their priorities should be...if you want your husband to place you as a priority over work, children, friends and activities, you need to be the same for him."⁵⁶ Of course we should prioritise our husbands, if we want them to prioritise us, but what about when we do this and he still places other things above us. You do not really give an answer to this.

His Fatherhood

You quote your husband in this chapter saying, "We get so caught up in doing what we do in our work that we're afraid we haven't done enough with our children. Or we're afraid [we] haven't done *well* enough, or *we're* missing something. It becomes even more of a problem with teenagers. We fear we can't communicate with them because we'll be perceived as old and irrelevant."⁵⁷ I would suggest to you and your husband that this isn't a specifically male concern. It is something that concerns me and I think most parents. We are concerned that we don't get the balance right, but that isn't something to do with our gender, more to do with our humanity and love for our children.

You go on to say, "Thoughts of failure and inadequacy are what cause many fathers to give up, leave, become overbearing from trying too hard, or develop a passive attitude and fade into the background of their children's lives...Mothers get overwhelmed with feelings of inadequacy, too, but only the most deeply disturbed ever abandon, ignore, or hurt their children."⁵⁸ Again you seem to be making a factual statement based not on reality but on your own perception. Men leave due to selfishness, not inadequacy, it is an excuse to justify hurting, abusing, neglecting or leaving your children. The reason men leave is because society has accepted men doing so. If a woman leaves her children she is vilified, if a man does, it is just another absent father. In contrast, single fathers are seen as heroes, whereas single mothers are looked down upon and seen as failures; yet another example of women being responsible for men's failings. Also in this chapter you miss out completely on the fact that there are men who abuse their children, and nowhere in the book do you suggest women leave to protect their children, I would go as far to suggest that your book is likely to convince women who are being abused to stay, putting their children into further danger and causing them further damage.

⁵⁴ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 93

⁵⁵ Proverbs 21:2 NLT

⁵⁶ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 119

⁵⁷ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 129

⁵⁸ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 130

His Emotions

In this chapter you write of Don who, “used anger to control his family. Each family member was so concerned about his temper that they lived their lives on tiptoe doing his bidding out of fear, not love.”⁵⁹ This is defined as abuse. As most professionals working with situations of domestic abuse can tell you, abuse is not about anger, it is about control. Although you talk of how Jenny, Don’s wife, saw transformation when she prayed, after she, “learned she not only didn’t have to tolerate his anger, but going along with it was disobedient to God...”⁶⁰ there are many women who are not so blessed. Abuse is unlikely to stop through prayer alone. You state that, “The best gift a wife can give in secret to calm her husband’s anger is to pray for him.”⁶¹ I would say this is dangerous advice for anyone in an abusive situation, controlling others by behaving in a way that appears angry will escalate and to advise people to pray, rather than find safety is completely irresponsible.

You say at the end of this chapter, “Don’t stand by and watch your husband be manipulated by his emotions. Freedom may be just a prayer away.”⁶² Men who control others by behaving in a way that appears angry are not being controlled by their emotions, they are controlling others by the way they behave. The man who is abusive is not the victim, those around him are. It is important to understand that men who choose to behave in these ways do so because they believe women are inferior to men, something your book has reinforced over and over again. If we are to stop abuse, we must challenge it. Slavery did not stop through prayer alone, it was through action, prayer, political intervention, hard work and massive sacrifice on the part of many courageous people that it ended. We will not stop abusive or unhealthy marriages through prayer alone. Although everything Jesus did was committed to prayer and He spent much time praying, He was always involved in practical action and challenge. Prayer is impotent without action.

His Obedience

In this chapter you spend time looking at how to pray for a husband to become obedient to God. As you go through the chapter you say, “If your husband’s disobedience to God’s ways has already brought down your house in some manner, know that God will honour *your* obedience and He will see that you will not be destroyed.”⁶³

If this was true, why are women who have been obedient to God for years continually being abused by their disobedient husbands? Some to the point of their death or the death of their children? When you have stated so strongly that divorce involves disobedience to God, you are advising women to stay in abusive relationships, waiting to be murdered in their obedience.

In summary I would ask you to consider what I have said. I and my children are some of the ones God rescued, but many, many women will not be rescued, especially if they read your book and the many dangerous statements it makes.

Thank you,

Natalie

⁵⁹ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 149

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 151

⁶³ Power of the Praying Wife (1997) page 173