

WOMAN, DON'T PULL DOWN YOUR OWN HOME!

Today's Text: Prov. 14

Extracts:

**The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands
[Prov. 14: 1]**

The ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of the twin towers of the World Trade Center took place on 5 August 1966. The massive building occupied 16 acres of land on Lower Manhattan in New York City. By the time the first tenant moved in, December 1970, the building was 110 storeys (stories) or 1,353 feet (412 metres) tall. From the observation decks at the top of the towers, you could see 45 miles in each direction. The building was officially opened on 4 April 1973, that is, almost eight years from the ground-breaking event. However, on Tuesday, 11 September 2001, Al Qa'eda terrorists crashed two hijacked 767 commercial jet airplanes into the building. Within 104 minutes, from the time the first tower was hit, the famous World Trade Center had been reduced to rubble.¹ What took about four-and-a-half years to build was demolished in less than two hours!

It is now over three years since that event and the building site remains a sad memory, a vacant eye sore in prestigious Lower Manhattan. What does that tell us about life? First, that it only takes a moment of madness to destroy what has taken painful years to build. Second, that rebuilding may not be an easy exercise. Given such reality, why do some wives tear down their own homes with their own hands?

In a Christian marriage, the wife is to her husband what the church is to Christ [Eph. 5: 22-25]. Just as Christ needs His church in the fulfillment of His earthly mission, so does the husband need his wife to fulfil God's plan. Therefore, can the wife afford the luxury to want to pull down her own home? What has pushed her in that direction and what will assuage her rage? These and other issues form the subject of today's lesson.

¹ "World Trade Center," www.greatbuildings.com/buildings/World_Trade_Center.html

1. Honestly, some husbands are terrible!

In a Christian marriage, the currency in circulation in the home is a two-sided coin with “love” as the head and “respect” as the tail. That is summarized in the Scriptures as follows: “Let each one of you in particular so *love his own wife* as himself, and let the wife see that she *respects her husband*” [Eph. 5: 33]. That coin remains legal tender in that house as long as the husband’s love for his wife and her respect for him are *genuine*. Otherwise, we may have a counterfeit coin that nobody wants. Interestingly, counterfeit coins are not minted by the State but by evil-minded counterfeiters. With respect to a Christian marriage, Satan is the counterfeiter whose sole aim is to destroy marital harmony. Unfortunately, we tend to fall into the trap by our own making, when we breach the social and spiritual contract between a man and his wife.

In truth, husbands can be the guilty party that pushes their wives to want to tear down their homes. Here are a few examples:

a) *Domestic violence*

For one reason or the other, some husbands are very abusive and disrespectful. They treat their wives as trash, beat them mercilessly with their tongues where physical attacks can invite legal sanctions, and disrespect them in the presence of the children, family and friends. They are insensitive to their wives’ needs or pressures. All that matters to such husbands is what they are entitled to, not their own responsibilities. When the wife finds that neither her communication nor patience is making any difference with him, she can explode!

b) *Infidelity*

To add salt to injury, the husband may be unfaithful to his wife and doing it in a reckless way. For example, some men have been known to carry on sexual liaisons with their praying partners, domestic helps, and sisters-in-law or even be involved in incest. How do you expect a faithful wife to stomach such shame, especially if her husband is unrepentant?

c) *Squandering*

The wife may be the only one talking about saving and investing family’s earnings, whereas her husband wants to squander their earnings on gambling, drinking and other pleasures, from which his wife cannot benefit. It is even worse where the man may be unemployed and his wife is the sole breadwinner. If he refuses to be corrected, what can the poor woman do?

2. But are their wives any better?

In reality, the man and his wife may be two of a kind! Her problems could also be self-inflicted, as her answers to the following questions may reveal:

a) *Why did you marry him?*

Some people claim to have married out of love. However, when you scratch the surface, there is much more to it. For example, she may have married for money or power or necessity. She may have been under social pressure from family and friends to settle down. She may have been watching her age and fearing that menopause may soon set in. In such circumstances, the first suitor to knock on her door is the best love that has ever come her way! Taking the literal meaning of Isaiah's words, such women fall into the following circumstances: "In that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, 'We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by your name, *to take away our reproach*'" [Is. 4: 1]. A man in that situation will hardly respect the one that he winds up marrying! Nevertheless, we do know that some women sought the Lord's guidance in choosing their husbands. I doubt if such women would want to pull down such a marriage.

b) *What is your contribution to the home?*

Many wives come into the marriage only to enjoy and not to suffer. They do not care what pains their husbands may be passing through as long as their own interests are never compromised. They come into the marriage with pre-nuptial agreements that have already set out how to share assets and liabilities in the event of a break up. They pursue sex without morality, and do not care how their husbands feel about their infidelity. How can such women complain when their husbands reciprocate?

3. Happily, you can make a difference!

In today's Bible text, we are told that a wise woman builds her house while the foolish woman "pulls it down *with her hands*" [Prov. 14: 1]. As we have already established in earlier lessons, a person who fears God is said to be wise, while a person who does not regard God in his/her heart is said to be foolish. The wise woman and the foolish one have two hands each. With her pair of hands, she can build up or pull down her home.

Contrary to views held in some quarters, a wife is actually the powerhouse in a marriage because the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world! The man may be the boss and all that but who drives the family bus? There is the story of a man who was always boasting in a community clubhouse that he was the boss of his house. The story soon reached his wife. One day, as he was boasting again, thanks to a few glasses of beer, somebody tapped his shoulder to warn him that his wife

was right behind him. Trying to defend his ego, he stood up, looked at his wife and turned to his colleagues, saying, “As I have just told you, I am the boss of my house, and . . . and, I have my wife’s permission to say so!” I wonder who would doubt who was the real boss at that moment!

It is a major spiritual responsibility to be a wife. When God took away the man from his parents’ control, He handed him over to his wife, “and they shall become one flesh” [Gen. 2: 24]. For that to be possible, her husband has to give up the control over him of his family of birth. Will his parents and siblings be comfortable with that? Will the man be willing to replace the pampering from his family of birth with the strict control of his new family? Can his wife effectively replace his parents and siblings? How will she handle the role conflicts and role ambiguities that may best explain some of her husband’s mood swings?

That is why she needs to be wise to be able to perform her unenviable tasks. When she puts on the whole armour of God, she will have on her left hand the shield of faith with which she “will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.” With the other hand, she will handle “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” [Eph. 6: 11, 16, 17]. When Nehemiah and his fellow exiles were being obstructed from rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, “with one hand, they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon” [Neh. 4: 17]. When thus equipped, she becomes the minister of home affairs, the financial controller and internal auditor, the chief chef, the educator of the children and protector of her husband. She can even hinder her husband’s prayers [1 Pet. 3: 7]! Therefore, it is a rare privilege to be a wife.

Let us examine two Bible cases and learn how the women of faith handled them:

a) *The authoritarian husband*

Queen Esther, a Jewish exile in Persia, was married to King Ahasuerus whose domain stretched from “India to Ethiopia” [Esth. 1: 1]. He and his wife lived in different quarters of the palace. She only went to him in the inner court when she was invited or she could be killed if she went on her own [Esth. 4: 11]! He only sent for his wife when he wanted to show her off to visiting guests as a trophy [Esth. 1: 11] or, presumably when he wanted to sleep with her! If she refused to honour his invitation, divorce followed instantly [vv. 10-21]!

How many modern wives can face such harsh terms? Yet, Esther coped because she relied absolutely on God. When her people, the Jews, were threatened with total elimination through the evil design of Haman, one of the king’s close ministers, she and her chambermaids fasted for three days and nights [Esth. 4: 16]. Then, without the king’s invitation, she went into his inner court. Guess what happened? The king found favour with her as soon as he laid eyes on her and he said to her, “What do you wish, Queen

Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you- *up to half the kingdom!*" [Esth. 5: 3]. In deed, she received more than she had bargained for. With God, nothing shall be impossible. No matter how wayward or authoritarian your husband may be, God can turn him around if you ask Him.

b) *The irresponsible husband*

Abigail was married to Nabal, a rich businessman who lived in Carmel. She is described as "a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance" while her husband "was harsh and evil in his doings" [1 Sam. 25: 1-3]. While David was running away from King Saul, he helped to protect Nabal's servants and their sheep from marauders for no pay. One day, David sent his servants to ask a favour of food and supplies from Nabal. He sent back a sarcastic reply as follows, "Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men when I do not know where they are from?" [vv. 10-11].

His wife did not know about the visit or her husband's response. David was furious when he was told the message. He massed together his troops to go and destroy Nabal and all that he had. As soon as word reached Abigail what disaster was knocking at the door, she left her drunken husband at home, saddled asses with abundant supplies and rushed in the direction of David's troops. As soon as she reached David, she fell on her face and asked for forgiveness for her household, saying, "let not my lord regard this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name is, so is he: Nabal is his name and folly is with him!" [vv. 18-25]. David was so moved by her wisdom that he replied, "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, *who sent you this day to meet me!* And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand" [vv. 32-33].

She saved her household that way. However, when Nabal was told the news after he had recovered from his drunkenness, "his heart died within him, and he became like a stone. Then, it happened, after about ten days, that the Lord struck Nabal, and he died." After her mourning, David proposed to her and she married him [vv. 36-42]. God took care of her needs!

We learn from those cases that a wife need not take the matter into her hands by using the ways of the world to deal with such problems. Instead, she should use the armour that God has made available to her both hands and build instead of pulling down her own home.

4. Conclusion: Go and do likewise!

The pressures of modern living are going to tell on your marriage. There will be family, friends, colleagues, and church members who will advise you not to take “the crap” from him any longer, to move on, that God will understand. I am sorry to tell you that God will never understand if you choose the easy but foolish way. Instead, with your anointed hands, you can build your home and make it rock solid. Try the following suggestions:

- Become a good driver of the family bus. A good driver can never be distracted by the passengers or by outside circumstances. On a long journey, a good driver cannot afford to fall asleep but has to be alert at all times. Married life’s journey is a long one. It is a spiritual warfare and you are the target. God spoke to Adam about the forbidden fruit but it was Eve that Satan tempted. When she fell, her husband also fell [**Gen. 2: 15-17; Gen. 3: 1-6**].
- Take on joint programming of the family with your husband so that you can in deed become one flesh. Remember, you cannot afford to pamper him as the “spoilt brat” of his family of orientation. At the same time, you cannot afford to be like a school of hard knocks; otherwise, he will be missing home!
- Expand your “zone of indifference,” that is, raise your tolerance level so that sometimes, he can learn from his errors. The more he finds that your advice leads him to better results, the more he will trust your judgment and companionship.
- Do not ever put down the armour of God without which your hands will lack their spiritual power. Above all, pray without ceasing, asking for God’s protection over your husband and your household.
- All shall be well!

Your neighbour’s grass may look greener than yours but it may be artificial turf! Therefore, woman, don’t ever pull down your own home. Build it up!

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