

Husbanding

By Abner Kauffman

This is a message for men only. This message is called, "Husbanding." I don't even know if that is a word. I have wanted to give a message to the husbands for so long without insulting the wives. That is why I am now giving this message to men only.

Most young men have a vision to be married. I have been asked many times through the years if I would teach on the home. Brethren, it is a tremendous topic to me. I am a family man. Someone told me that I put too much emphasis on the family, but I believe the family is going to make the church. We can talk about all the good things of the Christian life and of the church, but our families are in bad shape.

Ecclesiastes 1:10, "Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new?" Maybe this is not new to you. I am not Paul at Mars Hill, speaking to the Epicureans who were there to satisfy their desire for something new. If you want something new, go read the National Geographic.

Is there anything new of the old time, which was already before us? I would like to paraphrase the last chapter of Ecclesiastes. Of making many sermons on the home there seems to be no end, and much preaching have been wearisome, but don't give up it is worth it all!

Sometimes we think we have things down on the home, but God wakes us up. The Lord blessed my wife and me with a son and daughter. And then God gave us Kathy. That was another story. God has a way, if we have hearts that are right, to carry us through these complications of married life.

A large majority of professing Christians are saying that they are sincerely trying to develop their marriage according to Biblical principles. If that is true, then why are so many marriages in trouble? I am not going to give statistics about the men out there. I am concerned about my brothers.

I am preaching to myself and to you. My race is well run as far as the family is concerned, but I have not lost the heart for families in Christian circles.

As for grandchildren, I know why God did not give grandpas little children. I am very weak. I was weak as a husband and as a father of the children. But, with the grandchildren, there is something that just melts.

A lot of you had special training for your job. You spent a lot of time to get training. Now, we are talking about something we enter in, and most of us have no training. You can make a success of it, a mediocre job of it, or be a complete failure and lose everything that you have been working for. That makes it serious.

I am going to use my family as an example. I can't talk about your family. I need to express what my family went through. We put our home up for people to look at. My family knows that, and they ask, "When are you preaching on the home?" When people see my children they ask, "Are you Abner Kauffman's child?"

When Mose and Denny teach on the home, I wonder, "Do you really live what you are preaching?" I tell you we fall short brethren, but I have a desire. I have a desire to see what the Bible says lived out in the home.

A lot of us entered this job recklessly. I am talking about the job as a husband. I was not converted when I got married. I loved my wife—selfishly. I was like Samson, "Get her, for she pleaseth me." It was a selfish love. I wanted her because she would be good for me. We entered our marriage that way. But, that is not God's plan. I marvel at how He can take our messed up lives and make something good out of it.

Of all my father's sons I was probably the most rebellious. I was rebellious against my parents. I don't understand God. We have a son and six daughters, and they all love the Lord Jesus. We are together in church and doctrine. I hear of some parents who walked with God and their children are scattered. I say, "Lord what's going on?" I don't understand.

When I give you some of these things that the Lord laid on my heart, I want you to understand it's not the things I did. It was not everything my wife did, but she contributed very much to the blessings we have today. I have a wonderful life.

We signed up for the job of husbanding. You go up to the girl you love and say, "I would like to be your husband." And she says, "You're hired." Well maybe it was a little bit more romantic than that. But, basically that is what happens. Isn't it?

As I was preparing this message I could not remember how I asked my wife. I was not even sure. I was just sure I wanted her for my wife. I don't even think she said, "You're hired." But, she did hire me!

We go through these things and we report for work in front of the minister. He says, "Let me see your résumé." "What do you mean résumé? I don't have any." In a lot of jobs they want to know what your experience is. But, many of us entered in this job knowing practically nothing. But, from my experience what I did know, I got from the bad side of the railroad tracks.

We presented ourselves to the minister. We said we are ready to step in to the job. Do you wonder why we have the mess we do? My wife and I were not converted. I know what it is to be a boozier. I was never into drugs. I was so tired of the tobacco habit. I did not throw my cigarettes down the toilet when I got converted. I threw them in the field out behind the barn, but I would watch where they would go. Because I knew an hour later, I would desire them. I was in bondage to those things.

I got so desperate in my Christian life. You may think I was not a Christian because I was still smoking. I was a born again child of God! I believe I was! Nobody talked to me about the sins I was walking in, but I wanted to be clean for God. Finally, one day in my barn I fell on my face. I said, "Lord, please, please, won't you take me like I am?" I never smoked again.

You may wonder if I did my part. I don't know if I did anything, but I know that God did! I had a marvelous deliverance from my tobacco habit!

I tremble when I realize the seriousness of what I would like to share. I am convinced knowing God's plans of diversity. There are some who are reading this that are soft and tender. They are ready for anything that God can give them. There are probably some that have heard preaching on the home. They are not sure if this message is for them. There are others reading that have rigid hearts. They think it does not matter what you teach from the Word of God. They say, "My marriage is on the way down."

I would like to use the following Scriptures as a lesson for us. These verses are very dear to me. Isaiah 28:23-24, "Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? Doth he open and break the clods of his ground?" You farmers know what that means? He's plowed it. Now he takes it, and he smoothes it out. That's how you plant. Some of you may not know what farming is. That's all right; let me explain a little bit about farming. But, I am not farming Lancaster County farms. I want to farm some hearts.

Isaiah 28:25, "When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rye in their place?" Fitches are fine tender-coated seed. You have the cummin, which is a little bit tougher in the husk. You have the wheat, barley and rye. It says in verse 26, "For his God doth instruct him to discretion and doth teach him."

I am going to take the position of the plowman. I am called to scatter the seed and sow the ground. Some of you in here are like fitches and some of you are barley. You might not like this, but some of you may be tough hulled grain. Some of you it just takes a little to break. Yet, I am going to speak to all of you the same way. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument. But, how do you thresh when you have all this different seed? The Holy Spirit is able to take the Word, and He can give it to you that you can receive it. If you are a hard wheat kernel with a thick husk, the Holy Spirit can make a pounding in your heart.

Why do I say this? I believe that the Christian home is one of the greatest, marvelous institutions that God ever gave man. I won't back down in that. I am convinced. I am a homebody, even though I have traveled a lot. But, I have never gotten over getting homesick. I had to leave for the meetings this morning. My wife was on the way in. She was just a couple of miles away. She called, but we had to get here. It hurt me that I had to get here. I don't understand these husbands who have taken a wife and so easily after a few years become so distant. I don't understand. How is it with you?

Isaiah 28:27, "For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod." Those are threshing instruments. They are not all the same. You would never thrash out a fitch with a wheel of an ox-cart. You would smash in into oblivion. Isaiah 28:29, "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." I believe when I talk about these things, brethren, I want you take these things, take them in to your life, and take them in to your home. If you have a problem, don't give up. Maybe the ox cart riddled you up. But, don't give up. One of the worst things a child of God can do is giving up!

My wife and I do a lot of traveling. If there is anything that breaks my heart is what I see going on in churches. It's almost worse than what is going on at home.

What is going on out there? I saw a bumper sticker that said, "A man plus a woman makes marriage." If I ever saw a superfluous sign it was that. What else makes marriage? That's where we are at, brethren. We are in that situation where we have to tell people what makes a marriage. I have spoken on this long ago. We are playing around with things like that.

Now you might say I am preaching from outside of the church, but I tell you it's creeping in to the church. We are becoming immune to these things. They don't seem so bad anymore. We need to wake up as fathers. You have young boys, and they are getting caught and ensnared in some of this horrible thinking that is in the world. We better be clear where we are. You better have your home a place where your children just love to be.

So, we jumped in to the deep water of marriage. We tried to survive. My wife and I were married five years before we found the Lord Jesus. I don't understand it. My wife said to me, "I hear people telling about their marriage before they came to Christ, but Abner we never had a lot of struggles before we came to Christ." I answered, "I guess not, but do you realize how selfish I was?"

Some of you may have seen a romantic drawing before. It has candlelights and roses inside of a heart. I was raised an Amish boy. I was a reader all my life. I had to do my reading with kerosene light. When I left the Amish church, and had electric lights, it caused me to have a problem that I still have today. I hate 40-watt bulbs. If I go to a store, I buy 100-watt bulbs. I like to see. And then we come to couples night; everyone knows that Abner is not romantically impressed by darkness. So, I could draw some different things in this heart to show you that marriage is what it takes. I am going to draw a cross instead of roses and candles. That is what is going to make your marriage. It depends on where your heart is. If you are on the cross and the Lord Jesus Christ is on the throne that will make the difference. But, there are too many of us who have never come to that point where we are willing to get on that cross and allow the Lord Jesus to be king of our lives. It has affected our marriage.

Unless we can see that, we can go through all kinds of couple's nights. One time they told my wife and me to eat from the same plate. That is not going to make me more romantic. But, a broken heart before God is going to make a tremendous difference. I know because I was married and even after becoming a Christian, I bow my head in shame at my selfish attitude. Did you know selfishness comes from not being crucified? Husbands, where are you? In your heart, who has the throne and who is on the cross? I know there are a lot of men who like to crucify their wives. They say if she were on the cross our marriage would be happy. But, I tell you it won't because your very attitude tells me you are not on the cross. That's the only way it's going to work.

Husbands, *husbanding*! Oh, how we need to see the importance of that. What is a husband? How have some of us survived so long? In the marriage and as a husband, how have some of us survived? You are going to take a girl, young man, and you are going to promise and commit to her for as long as you both shall live. You better face the husband and wife thing. You'd better face it. I didn't. It is only a miracle of God, that my wife and I came through as good as we did, not unscathed though. When we found Jesus He made it better.

I can say that my love was shallow, even in my early Christian life. So cheer up young man, it gets better all the time. I have no qualms saying that. In fact I told my wife I would rather preach these messages with her sitting here. Marriage is a wonderful thing!

It is not good. And the Lord God said, "It is not good..." It is not good for what? The Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone." Why did he say that? A confirmed bachelor once said to me, "You say the Lord God said it is not good for man to be alone. You always speak to the married people and say that it is not good for man to be alone, but you have left out the word *the*."

I tried it in my ministry. I tried something; I would ask the congregations back in the 70's if they would quote Genesis 2:18. They would say, "It is not good for man to be alone." I would say, "You flunked." Once I was in a church in Ohio, and I asked a young minister. He said, "It is not good for THE man to be alone." I said, "You win; you got it right." He said, "Somebody told me if Abner Kauffman ever comes to your church you better get it right."

I am not telling you that God did not mean Adam. But, I don't believe he only meant Adam. This brother that approached me never married, he felt his calling in life to be single. If that is your calling, God bless you. I am not saying you have to be married. I am not saying you are missing something... never mind that. I am not saying you cannot live a fulfilled life and not be married. But, I know this; He looked on Abner Kauffman and felt that it was not good for him to be alone.

What is a husband? Have you ever thought about that? What are you? A leader. Do you know what the husband really means? Husband means a keeper, caretaker, and a servant. In Honduras there is a word *hefe*. There are a lot of husbands that think that is all they are—the Hefe. I am the boss; I realize that if we fine-tune the doctrine that, yes, you are the head. But, the attitude that goes with that has been ruination. I do not believe that you and I can be the caretakers, if we have this vision in our heads that the buck stops here. It does, but that attitude has many Christian homes a sorrowful mess. I don't want to take away what is really our responsibility.

This is sort of a conflict. You think about the term leader and servant. Think about the term Chief and Indian. Think about the Spanish words, honcho and peon. I look at those words and I see that unless we get clear on these things we are not going to have a vision for our marriage.

One of my favorite verses when I think of a husband's responsibility is Proverbs 18:20, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing." I would like to ask you, is your wife a good thing? Honestly? Is your wife a good thing? I tell you brethren what a glorious place to raise our families if you believe your wife is a good thing.

You may finish reading this and feel that I am too tough on you. I am not going to talk about the sister's role. I want to bring to focus that MY home is MY responsibility.

I know you may be thinking, “What about my wife?” She is such a part of it. You know one of the worst things that we get in to our minds is the idea that Christian marriage is togetherness. Christian marriage is ONENESS. And who is going to put down his own body? You know when you get angry and you mouth your wife off? Or maybe inside you are full of resentment? You hate your own body. And the Bible says, “No man has yet hated his own body.” You know what the problem is? You are not one! The Lord God said in the beginning, “They have become one flesh.” We need to understand that. The world says that you have an option, you don’t love your wife, and you have an option. The truth is you have NO OPTION!

I get a little weary of this teaching, and yet I have taught it. You need to choose to love your wife. And every morning and every day and every mishap you have to have to re-choose again. I don’t have to choose anymore to love my wife. You may wonder how this happened. I don’t know. But, I don’t say I am going to choose to love her. You know what that means. I am not saying that it is wrong. If you find your love floating on the way out, you are going to have to grab it. You are going to have to choose to love your wife. It is not the ideal though.

But, neither is love that is just wishful roses and dark lights. That’s not love. You are going to wear out of that. Couples night is over. I told my wife one time on the way to couples night one time, “Anna, I love you.” She said, “We’re going to couples night.” You know why? I found out that at couples night they ask, “When was the last time you told your wife you love her?” I said, “On the way here.” That’s cheating. My wife knew it when I said it.

I am going to speak in down frank terms, because sometimes that is what we need. I have not found the answer to all things. I was at a seminar sometime ago when a brother stood up in a group of 300 men. He was the first speaker. Maybe some of you were there? The first topic he spoke on was, “Our Love for God.” The one right after that was, “Our Love for Our Wives.” That man had courage. He stood behind the pulpit in the afternoon session. He said women are not very smart, but he said they are almost always right. Something sprang up in me. My wife can come to conclusions by methods I know not of. But, I better listen.

I’ll give you an example. My wife and I were driving home in our motor home from Montezuma, Georgia about two years ago. We were traveling on I-85. My wife was sitting in the passenger side, and I was driving. She said, “Abner, I think there is a noise somewhere.” I hate when my wife says that! I don’t hear very well, and I have a way of procrastinating. She said, “I hear a noise.” I said, “What do you hear Anna?” She said, “It’s just a noise.” I love my wife, but sometimes she comes to conclusions. I was not quite ready to stop and look and see what is happening. So, I drove a little further down the road. It started getting louder out there. Sixty-seventy miles down the interstate. I ask, “What does it sound like?” “I don’t know,” my wife said. After a while I started to hear it. And we had gone about forty miles. We came to an exit and I said, “Anna I hear it, too. I am getting off.” We drove off the exit, and we drove in at a little restaurant. We went in and asked them, “Where is a truck garage?” The man at the restaurant told me where it was. So, I started up, backed up and the whole tire assembly fell off on the parking lot. The wheel, the bearings, everything came off. We praise God that we were not on the interstate driving when this happened. Never underestimate your wife. She may not know if it is a wheel bearing or the muffler bearing, but listen to her! You listen to her! Many times she has wisdom. I don’t know how they get it. But, they are often right. It has been a tremendous help for me in my married life to realize that my wife is no dummy. I think it is something we need to learn.

Let’s go back to my original question. What kind of husband are you? To get a balance and a focus on this, let’s go back to our wedding day. I know there is probably a big difference what happened on your wedding day. I hope it did not happen to you what happened to me. I almost fainted. I don’t know what happened. I walked up to the minister. I just about did not make it.

At the wedding there is a lot of emphasis on gifts. But, I would like to say that the greatest gift, the unique gift, irreplaceable gift was your home. I don’t mean the house. I don’t care what kind of house it was. My wife and I lived in a very ramshackle house for years. But we had a very beautiful home. I am talking of the gift of the home. There is something that bothers me when I see young couples starting out. Maybe they take a voyage to Hawaii or someplace to spark their home. Don’t do that. I am not saying don’t going to Hawaii. But, don’t lean on that as being the ultimate. You’ve got many more beautiful things as a young husband. And I am just talking to young men, how do you look at your home?

We used to have a man who came to visit us when we were farming in Bedford. He had his legs cut off down here at his knees. He was a dirty mess. He stunk. Somebody would drop him off at our farm. I used to put him up. He wanted to sleep in the barn. That is what he wanted. And we used to feed him, and he would stay around for maybe a week. Sometimes two weeks. There was nothing clean or Christian about him. But, my heart went out to that old man. When I was studying on this message, I thought of something about old Bill Smith, that’s what his name was. One day he came there in the dead of winter. It was cold. And Bill asked if he could stay in my barn. I said, “Bill, you’ll freeze.” He said, “I won’t freeze.” I said, “I am not going to put you in the barn. I am going to put you in the house.” This fellow was filthy. I took him in to the bedroom. My wife was with me in it too, though she did question it a little bit. But, I took

him in to this room. I'll never forget what happened as I was leaving the room. I told him there is heat here and a bathroom. It was like a little apartment. I told him where the things are. I told him, "You make yourself at home, Bill. We will bring you something to eat." I'll never forget what happened next. When I was just walking out, closing the door, Bill stood there in his cut-off boots. He looked around the room and got a big smile on his face. And you know when I thought about how our homes should look, I thought of old Bill Smith. It wasn't all that pretty a room, but to him it was the most beautiful thing he had seen for a long time.

You see, brethren, unless you and I look at our home as one of the most beautiful things that God gave us, we are not going to take care of it. We are not going to do what it takes. We are going to become sloppy and careless, and finally we like it better how it looks at the neighborhood coffee shop or over at McDonalds or down at some restaurant, or at somebody else's place. I protest to you husband's, that's not where you belong! I am not opposed to going to a coffee shop if need be. But, I see this happening over and over. I see men out there down at the local restaurants. Maybe your wife should work a waitress so that she can feed her loved one? I am not opposed to stopping at a restaurant if you are traveling. I am not talking about that. How does your home look to you? No matter what the home looks like, no matter what the financial status of this home, you can have a beautiful home.

I am going to confess to you that my wife and I live on a little different scale than what we did 30-40 years ago. We were farmers, and we hardly knew how to make ends meet. I have an exception, I never heard my wife complain. We lived in a house that was a cold ramshackle house. We moved to Bedford, and we had a little better house. Then not long ago we sold the old house because it is right along the highway and we built a new one. My wife has a beautiful house now. But, when I wanted to build this house, I would have built a cracker box. I am happy as long as I can have my things inside. But I said, "Anna I would like you to tell me what we would like to build." I am not putting the blame on her for what we have now, but she has a beautiful home. But, that has not changed our home. It has not changed our home. Too many times our focus is on something like that, and that is supposed to change our home. Some man will build his wife a house because that might make her happy. Let me tell you something, it won't. She still has to live with you. Maybe you are thinking that I don't know your wife. I don't need to know her. Because I know what my wife has done in my marriage. When we start taking this marvelous gift and take it for granted...we may not take it for granted. I have been married almost 46 years. There are a lot of people who have been married longer than that. But, to me the marriage is the most precious thing besides my salvation.

Maybe I am going to get some of you young boys all hyped? But, I don't care if I do. Just do it in the Lord. Don't try what I did. It might not come out that good. I didn't know better.

Now we are married, we have a home and the honeymoon is over. Now, we start going to work. Oh, it's good to go home because my young bride is at home. And then the Lord blesses us with children. Then a year and half later, He gives us another one. You go to work each day and come home tired. Your work is done, and you think that your wife was sitting at home all day.

I'll tell you something, I am an awful poor Mister Mom. I believe a lot of you are the same way. And one of the poorest areas is we don't realize what our wives do. We have little Betsey, and she's just oh so cute. You say, "She's wonderful to hold, but you know I have to go to work. I think she needs attention, Mom." Hey that's real life. You better face it. You who have this dream that your wife will always welcome you with open arms. Then you find out she is back in the bathroom with the little boy trying to get some things straightened up. That's going to happen. It's when the rubber meets the road. That's going to come. This home was to be a refuge and a safe place for my wife and children has now become a place of tension. Do you know whose fault it is? Sure you know. Whose fault is it?

We used to have a bakeshop. For years I worked in the bakery with my girls, I have six daughters. One morning we were working together. I had a habit of singing and whistling. One morning I was weighed down due to church things. I can't blame it all on that. I was working in the bakery, and I said to one of my daughters, "What is going on? I don't hear any singing." You know what she said to me? She said, "Dad, how can we sing when you are not happy?" That smote me! I believe fathers it is your responsibility to control the atmosphere in the home. You have no right as a husband. You may think that I don't understand what kind of problems you are going through. I do. I understand. But, we have no right to walk around making our home a gloomy home. You may not feel happy. Act happy. Maybe you are a hypocrite? Well, and then get straightened up. If you are a hypocrite, you need to repent. I tell you, brethren, we are responsible for the attitude in the home.

I have failed. Please don't look to me and say, "You have the answers, Abner." I know the love of the Lord Jesus in my heart is the answer. But, sometimes we are just not as loving. The love is not as real and vital as it ought to be.

Here is something I would like to tell you. What is the proof in the pudding? Let's make pudding. Different people want to make a pudding. Some of you men want to make a pudding. I don't want to eat it, but let's say we do. Now, here is the pudding. It comes out, and it is beautiful clear. Just like a pudding ought to look. Over here is a pudding that has some lumps in it. And over here is another pudding, all kinds. The old saying is that the proof of the pudding is

not in the pudding, but in the eating. You follow that? You see that is how it is with our marriage. That is what it proves with us as husbands. The proof of your marriage is not in how it looks. It is what the children and wife are getting out of that pudding.

I tell you brethren, if there is anything that ought to draw our daughters and our sons after they are married and gone it is the memories of home. What will draw them to you are beautiful memories of home, not negative ones. We have a tendency as young men to build our home on the example of the home our father built. Sometimes that's good and sometimes it's bad. We have a tendency to be and become what we hated in our father.

My father had a tremendous voice. He could raise my mother in the house from way away. My father was a disciplinarian. There was no question who was the head of the home. I became very reactionary to that. But, do you know after about three years of marriage that I, to my shock when I got converted, found out that I was following right in my dad's footprints? I can also holler. I can also put forth a lot of oomph. I don't want to say I didn't, but I tend to think that I did not have the anger that my father had. But, I was following in his footsteps. Things we hate the worst are often times things that become part of our pattern.

God wants to start in us a new person, a new life. In that marriage, that's what He wants to do. He wants to shake this marriage. Do you realize that the homes I am talking about are not solely for our happiness? That's part of it. But, God wants to use it for a witness to the world. That's why He likened the marriage to Christ and the Church. He wants to use it to witness to the world.

We used to have boys visit us that went to college in Penn State. They would come down over the weekend. These boys would come down from the college to go to church. We were a Mennonite Church, and we were rather dry. And one was a charismatic Pentecostal. He was a nice boy and he came to our home one day for a noon meal. We had the meal, and we had a habit of singing a lot in our home. When the children were small and as they grew up, we did a lot of singing. We sang some songs while this boy was there after the meal. As we were walking out, this boy wanted to go back to college. He put his arm on mine and he said, "You know, Abner, you're church is awful dry, but your families are something else." You think you are witness? Be a witness in your home.

There are lots of people out there that are fascinated at people with a family. You just take your family to Wal-Mart. I am sure you have done that. You are not constantly smacking your child's hand to stay out of the shelves. They look at you, and they wonder how you do this.

My wife and I stopped at a fast food restaurant as we were traveling. And there was this little boy and this daddy. They were eating. It was a ruckus, for just this little boy and his daddy. I tried to ignore it, but I heard the boy say something I will never forget. He told his daddy at the height of the argument, "You wait till I get you home!" Did you hear me right? This boy was about seven years old! This boy told his daddy! Brethren, I am persuaded of better things. I believe when the husband's place and the wife's place is right in the home, the children have a tremendous step given to them in a world that is full of problems. The children will know how to order their ship. They have a security that all of us really need. They need that.

Now, what is the proof in the pudding? I believe the proof in the pudding of the marriage is the relationship. Now, I could talk about the love of the Lord Jesus Christ in your wife. I tell you where I fail in marriage is with the relationship. You know why? Do you and I understand that Jesus Christ did not come on this earth to be respected? He did not come for prestige. He came to be a servant. A servant is one who will give time. His things are not important and that is what can make relationships. I failed.

You know what one of my greatest problems was? I have not crucified it like it ought to be—that is my love for books. I remember soon after we were married I worked at Harrisburg State Hospital. It was a mental institution. My wife and I lived in a little trailer. It was an 8x32 foot trailer. I was not a Christian. I went in to the Harrisburg Library, got an armful of books. I went home and sat down in my little trailer. I was happy! You know why? Because selfish and uncrucified me had all I want. I had a home, a dear sweet wife that I loved in the way I could and books! I was reading a book one Sunday when I was off from work. I heard something. The trailer was small. I jumped up, and I went to see where my dear young bride was. She was back in our little bedroom, and she was crying. I about panicked. What is wrong? You know what she said? I am lonely. I am lonely. Oh God forbid!

Brethren, I am here to tell you there are a lot of people who have wives who are lonely. They are lonely. To a wife relationship is especially important. I don't always do it. My wife loves if I go walking with her. Does that help her walk faster? Does she do it because she sees I need some trimming? Well, that might be a part of it, but I believe it is the companionship.

When I go away, she usually comes with me. But, loneliness can be a horrible thing. I came across something that I was reading that was very interesting. John the Revelator was a man who loved fellowship. He loved the brotherhood. You don't have to read long in the book of John before you see this. He just loved it. And then when God put Him on the isle of Patmos, there was no fellowship except his vision. I am not sure how much time he spent there. It

does not tell us. But, there he was on an island. And out around him was this sea. It kept him from fellowship. He couldn't fellowship. I want us to see our homes like this. You're home can be what you envision it to be. In Revelation 21 (I came across this years ago), I was puzzled because it said that John saw Heavenly Jerusalem come down and a new heaven and a new earth. And then he makes a strange statement. I was puzzled, then it all fell together, *there was no more sea!* I believe brethren that heaven is going to be everything we desire. The things in this earth that were killing us will not be there. But, I believe here on earth we can experience no more sea. Relationship and oneness is what need in our marriage.

For years I have had a struggle with people that say that Paul had to crucify the flesh daily. I had a struggle with that because it was taken completely out of context. I am going to tell you something else that can irritate me a little bit. That is when a man or when a preacher gets up and says the wife is a helpmeet. That is not proper! You should say the wife is the help fitted. She supplies that which you need. Maybe you are too proud to say that, so you say she is my helpmeet. That is not proper English. That is not the proper Bible definition. Yes, the Bible does say that she is a helpmeet. However, as I studied it means she is the help that God gave me that will supply the needs that I have.

There is a man named Ed, and he played a real trick on me. I am glad he did. It came out very well. I was coming home from church, and my daughter Anna Joy was coming home from Haiti. She had been in Haiti for five years. We were sitting there at home and had some visitors. Then the phone rang. It was Brother Ed. He said, "Brother Abner, I got a problem." I said, "What is your problem, Ed?" He said, "I got a boy here that needs help." I was dumbfounded. What do you mean he needs help? I thought he needed spiritual help. He said, "He needs a helpmeet." I got a son-in-law by the name of Gary. Gary is a beautiful son-in-law, and I love him!

Before I finish, I would like you to consider your employment as a husband in the home. Years ago I read some of Dr. John Rice's writings. He was very much a family man. He was having meetings in the church one time, and there was a family that sat in the back pew. Every night they moved up, up, up. The night that he talked on the family home they were sitting in the second row. And he said this, "Any of you husbands that don't take your place in the home," and he stepped down in the first bench pointing his finger at this man in this family, "Are a parasite in the community." The man got up and walked out. The deacon came to the minister, John Rice, after the service and said, "You did it now, that man has not been in church for years. Now he has come, and he has come all the way up front, and you scared him out." John Rice said this, "But he knows the truth." The story said that this man became one of the staunchest pillars for the Lord Jesus Christ because of that. Why? Because he took seriously his role as a husband. I believe we need to do that.

Forgive me if I thrashed you as if you are fitch. I did not mean to do it. But, I meant to wake us up—all of us including myself. God bless you.

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