

## Jay Zinn – The Other Side of the Shell

When God made Eve from Adam’s rib as a “help meet” for him (Genesis 2:18, 21 KJV), it must be understood that it came in the context of marriage *before* the fall, not after. Eve was presented to Adam without fault, without sin, perfect in every way—body, soul, and spirit. And she was made to complete the image of God through her union with Adam—as his wife. The complete likeness of God was not seen in man *without* a wife. It came when Eve was created to complete Adam (see Genesis 1:27 with 5:1-2).

We husbands tend to see the term “help meet” as “help mate.” For most husbands that translates into the idea of: “My wife (like Eve) was made for *me*, for *my* pleasure, to make *my* life happy and to submit to *my* every whim and decision. I am the man—she is the woman. I am the head—she is to submit” (I can feel the blood of wives boiling now).

Let’s be honest men, most husbands expect their wives to defer to them over and over again. Our wishes trump theirs. They cook, we eat. We drive, they ride. We hold the remote while they watch us channel surf. We spend our time and money on sports, recreational toys and hobbies; they work within the budget we allot them. We work, they stay home. When we want sex, they are to grant us our conjugal rights (1 Corinthians 7:4a) no matter how they feel or how their day went. All this derived from two simple words: *help meet*. I know this doesn’t describe every husband, but if some of this fits your philosophy on marriage...well, let’s talk.

This might surprise you but the original language implies something different where the words “help meet” are used. *Help* comes from the Hebrew word, **ezer** (ay’-zer), which, when combined with its root word, **azar** (aw-zar’), it means: *to aid, assist, protect, support, rescue, or surround*. The obvious implications of these words appear to be exactly the opposite of what men have thought to be their own role for their wives. After all, husbands are to protect, aid, and assist their weaker partners—right? But this “help meet” phrase is in the context of what Eve was to be for her husband. And does this not describe what God is to us?—i.e. our rescuer, protector, support, aid, and one who surrounds us with his angels? Yes, this same Hebrew word is used numerous times to describe God’s relation to us as our Helper in time of need. Yet, as God is strength and power to us, he also made our wives to be a strength and power to us as men. Hmmm. Chew on that one for a while, guys.

Let’s look at the next word, “meet.” *Meet* comes from the Hebrew word, **neged** (neh’-ghed), which, when combined with its root word, **nagad** (naw-gad’), it means: *to face, to front, to stand boldly out as opposite, a counterpart, a mate who provides the other side (or view), to expose, opposite toward, to announce, to inform of, to make known*. Again, this implies strength and power in a wife to help her husband through life’s decisions, challenges, and goals. How interesting. This doesn’t sound anything like what we thought a “help meet” or “help mate” should mean. Instead, God was really saying,

“It is not good for man to be alone and incomplete—therefore I will make for him...”

- a power facing him.
- a strength opposite him.
- a counterpart to inform him.
- an opposite view to announce, expose, and make known to him.
- an aid to surround, rescue, and support him.

Does this sound familiar, men? We might call it nagging or annoying, whereas God calls it supporting and rescuing us from making unwise decisions without the valuable input of our wives. She will rescue us from haste. As it is written: “*The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.*”

How many men will admit they've made some pretty foolish mistakes because they went ahead and made decisions without first considering their wife's input? Did it turn out badly for you? Yep. And every time you looked at your wife afterward, you'd see those unspoken words in her eyes: "If you had only listened to me." Am I right? Hurts doesn't it?

When will we husbands come to understand that God gave us a gift, a valuable treasure, when he gave us our wife? It is a favor that he bestowed upon us (Proverbs 18:22). She is your counterpart, she has an opposing view, and she usually challenges your view with annoying questions because that is how God wired her to be. Ever hear the phrase: *opposites attract*? Many marriages are like this, and that can be a good thing and why unity in marriage is so important. If you want to hear from God about something, men, include your wife in the thinking process. He gave her to you for that reason. And don't get upset if she has an opposite view. Don't go blowing up like a toad and feel like she's questioning your superb and masterful intellect. This only slows you down to consider both sides of the spectrum—to count the cost—to make the best possible choices in life in family matters, in parenting, in financial management, and in your marriage. Remember the principle found in these words "help meet." Here it is—"Man, *plus* woman, *equals* Adam. And since Adam equals God's image or likeness—then God's wisdom in any matter is found in the two united in one mind and heart.

When an egg is cracked into two half-shells, the ragged edges of each side are completely different. But when you face them toward each other, you'll see where the edges join perfectly together to make a complete egg. So it is with marriage. You are both opposites of each other. The woman surrounds the man, the man receives the woman—they are complete, they become a whole. "*When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them "man"* (Genesis 5:1-2).

Notice that God refers to them as "one" unit—*man*. The original Hebrew word used here for "man" is **adam** (aw-dawm'). Thus we have Mr. and Mrs. Adam. They were "one" flesh. They were two half-shells becoming one shell to form a life together. Marriages fall short in their potential because couples tend to see themselves as separate rather than a unit. You have your life; she has hers—that is, until you need her for something. And if that's how you train your wife to relate to you from the start, that's how she'll relate to you after years of kicking against what is *unnatural* for her to do, and how God designed her to be toward you. (Note to the wives: there is a right way and a wrong way to approach your husband in matters you disagree with. Learn this, and he'll include you more easily in the process. That topic is for another day).

When a husband lives for his own pleasure and brings his wife into the loop every now and then, he becomes incomplete and unhappy in the relationship. And when we're unhappy, our wives become unhappy, too, because we've forced them to become a broken half-shell. She's unable to *support* and *assist* and *surround* and *aid* and *rescue* and *advise* because she's been cut off and set aside from that. She's unhappy because she's not able to live for what she's been designed to do. So this might force her to find the other half of her shell in another man, or in her children, or through a career among peers who value her input and wisdom. She may be *in* the house you provide for her, but she is not home and has left you to your own demise. The light in her eyes is absent when you come home, the respect she once had when you had her ear has left when you speak, her passion is nonexistent when you have sex, and the smoking wick of her love has been snuffed out. Then the husband wonders why there's no "flame" left in his heart for his wife. It was there once, wasn't it? That's why you married her, isn't it? So can you really say, "I married the wrong woman?" Maybe. Or maybe she married the right guy but he changed and,

therefore, she changed so now you both feel trapped in the marriage and, if the circumstances are right, both of you are now vulnerable to succumb to the temptation of finding another “flame of passion” (a flame that can burn you, by the way).

Is it her fault? Perhaps some of it, or perhaps all of it, because you’ve been such a perfect husband—right? Hmmm. Don’t deceive yourself, men, you’re not Jesus! Jesus is the only husband who can claim to be the perfect husband. So how much are you willing to accept responsibility for your side of the marriage? She *can’t* create the same crack pattern that your half-shell brings to complete her. Only you have that fitting crack pattern so what have you been doing with it? Have you built a wall between you to prevent her from fitting into your half of the shell? Will you be “man” enough to tear down that wall and bring her shell back into the grooves where she belongs? You have the power in Christ, and you have the choice to make it work. It may take time and it may take years for her to trust you again, but how many years did it take for you to push her away?

If she stays with what the marriage is now with no hope of seeing a change in you, then she’s trapped. If she leaves, she’s condemned by the Christian community. If she’s unfaithful, she’s marked for life and cast out. Again, whose fault is that? When you, as her husband, stand before the judgment seat of Christ and he asks you what did you do with the treasure and gift in your wife he gave you—what will you tell him? Will he hold you accountable, or hold your wife accountable for how the relationship turned out? I know there are exceptions to this, but God made Christ your head and Christ made you the head of your wife who is His bride to be—so I ask you again: “How have you treated His betrothed while she was in your care?”

Okay, let’s shift gears. If you’re convicted and don’t want to read on, that’s a good thing because it means the Holy Spirit’s working on you. I’m getting convicted writing this. Go Holy Spirit! Let’s look at ways to begin turning this thing around and shore up your marriage. First, understand that “unity” is a key word for a successful marriage. Because you desire respect and she desires love, this can only be obtained by “unity.” So how do you get that? God is triune in nature. He is one (a compound unity), yet He is three (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Since we are made in His likeness, we, too, are tri-part beings—body, soul, and spirit. To become a whole and complete egg as man and wife requires two tri-part beings becoming one unit—just as God is three, yet one. God wants man and wife to become united in three areas: *one* in spirit, *one* in soul, and *one* in flesh.

We become one in *spirit* with our wives when we make Jesus Lord of our lives and live in harmony with the Holy Spirit. When my spiritual tank gets low in my time spent with God, my selfish, carnal nature surfaces and hinders me from being a good husband. It’s like this: the closer I am to Jesus, the closer I’ll be to my wife. The farther I am from Jesus, the farther I’ll be from my wife. Being close to Jesus humbles me as a husband and releases more of His nature through me. My spiritual condition with Christ directly affects my relationship to my wife, especially in the other two areas of unity: body and soul.

My *soul* is the emotional and intellectual part of me. If I pull away from Jesus, then I’ll pull away from my wife into self-centeredness, which means less quality time with her (that starves good emotion) and less time talking with her (that starves intellectual interaction). In short, our *soul* unity (one mind), becomes disconnected and without consistent, intentional communication, there’s no healthy relationship. Without emotional and intellectual communication, there’s no passion. And without passion, there’s no romance—that is, no *one* flesh experience that is satisfying or completing.

So you can see why two people, both tri-part beings, cannot become one complete egg without unity in all these three areas: body, soul, and spirit. Like the legs of a tripod, if you take one leg away, the other two legs will fall. So, husband—if you remove unity in any of these three areas from your relationship to your wife, what’s left is a house of cards that will fall when the storms of life come to blow your house down. Do you want to be alone again? Do you want to become vulnerable to the enemy, the world, or the hardships of life? Then stop loving your wife—your God-given treasure—in these three areas. Stop laying down your life for her and you’ll both be incomplete half-shells.

Listen to the Apostle Paul’s insights and advice for husbands:

**Eph. 5:25** - *Husbands, love [unconditionally] your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*

**Eph. 5:28-30** - *In this same way [that Christ loves the church], husbands ought to love [unconditionally] their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church.*

**Col. 3:19** - *Husbands, love [unconditionally] your wives and do not be harsh with them.*

**1 Peter 3:7** - *Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner [physically] and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*

In closing, you will notice I added the bracketed word, “unconditionally,” in the verses. I did this because the Greek word for *love* (agape) used in these passages means exactly that—*unconditional love*. Men tend to love their wives with conditions: “I’ll love you, *if* you do this or that for me...”

The irony in this type of thinking, however, is that husbands will receive less than the best from their wives when their love is offered conditionally. A woman can tell when she’s loved for what she does, rather than for who she is. But when you love her *without* conditions, the way Jesus loves *you* without conditions, she’ll know she’s being loved with a *true* love. That type of love is irresistible to a woman. But it is a decision you’ll have to make and can only be accomplished through Christ’s love *in* you. Men are incapable of loving their wives “unconditionally.” That’s right—*incapable*. So when Christ is not our primary source of love and life, then he cannot manifest his unconditional love through you, the husband. All she’ll receive from your half of the shell is the limited love we squeeze out from our self-centered lives.

A Christ-centered life is a selfless life. A self-centered life is a selfish life. Selfless lives fertilize marriages. Self-centered lives drain them.

So let’s get back to Jesus, men! He’s the author and finisher of the best husbands in the world. Jesus is the only One who can love your wife through YOU—the other side of the shell.

***All scripture references are from the New International Version. Brackets added for clarification by author.***

**Recommended Book for Married Couples: Sacred Marriage by Gary Thomas**

**Recommended Book for singles: Boundaries in Dating by Cloud & Townsend**