

FOCUS  
ON THE FAMILY



BLESSING  
*Your*  
HUSBAND

*Understanding and Affirming Your Man*

Debra Evans

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*Blessing Your Husband*

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## INTRODUCTION

If anyone was ever entitled to be served by other people, Jesus was. But think about how He treated his closest companions: He got out a towel and started scrubbing their feet. Why?

“God sees us with the eyes of a Father,” asserts author and minister Max Lucado. “He sees our defects, errors, and blemishes. But he also sees our value. What did Jesus know that enabled him to do what he did? Here’s part of the answer. He knew the value of people. He knew that each human being is a treasure. And because he did, people were not a source of stress but a source of joy.”<sup>1</sup>

In marriage, most of us are willing enough to serve—if our spouse is equally willing, that is. When our husband lets us down, keeping our mind on marital ministry can be more difficult. But foot washing, not bookkeeping, is the first order of business on our personal agenda, especially where our marriages are concerned: “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:2-3).

*Completely* humble? *Every* effort? That’s a tall order, and one I’ll be spending more time on over the course of this book. Until then, however, let me give you a snapshot to refer to in the event you are wondering, “What does the biblical concept of blessing actually mean, and what does it have to do with my marriage?”

Family counselors Gary Smalley and John Trent, authors of *The Blessing*, offer the following explanation:

Genuine acceptance radiates from the concept of the blessing. For sons and daughters in biblical times, receiving their father’s blessing was a momentous event. At a specific point in their lives they would hear words of encouragement, love, and acceptance from their parents. [Some] aspects of this Old Testament blessing were unique to that time. However, the relationship elements of this blessing are still applicable today. In Old

Testament times, this blessing was primarily reserved for one special occasion. In contrast, [family members] today can decide to build these elements of blessing into [one another's] lives daily....<sup>2</sup>

Ephesians 2:4-10 gives us a small glimpse of blessing's definition in the matchless blessing our Father bestowed on us through His Son:

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Talk about *blessing!* Words can't begin to describe the fullness of blessing God has bestowed upon us by His grace: Our debt has been canceled; God has made us alive with Christ! And that is the basis for the blessings we bestow on our husband.

In the following chapters, I want to help you nurture your understanding of the many ways in which you can bless your husband. As your understanding increases, so will your capacity for putting your God-given gifts to use for His glory. Jesus calls each of us to use what the Father gives us (see Matthew 25:14-30; Ephesians 2:10). When we do, we invest valuable treasure where it can never be taken away from us—no matter what tomorrow brings.

In the meantime, as St. Augustine advised, “Do what you can do, and pray for what you cannot do.” Although our exclusive, committed love for our husband can't come close to approximating the Lord's unfailing love for him, God asks us to partner with Him in blessing our husband on His behalf.



Blessing our husband conveys our approval of him, thereby affirming he is lovable, capable, and valuable simply because of who he is. Dr. Smalley and Dr. Trent suggest that blessings include meaningful touch, spoken messages, attaching high value to those we bless, and picturing a special future for them.<sup>3</sup> In each case we base the blessing on our commitment to seeing God's blessings in their lives come to pass. We bless our husband, for example:

- by our words and actions, by way of our prayers, through our body language, with our facial expressions and physical gestures, and in the tone of our voice
- with nurturing touch and loving caresses as we welcome him with our body
- when we give him gifts, write birthday cards and notes of appreciation, make a surprise phone call in the middle of a busy workday, or extend an invitation for lunch
- through sending him spoken and unspoken messages that honor and encourage his God-given position of spiritual leadership, side-by-side ministry, and sacrificial service within marriage

By blessing our husband and holding him up in prayer before our loving Father, we quietly exercise the privilege of participating in the work of heaven. Blessing our husband for our Father's glory—investing time, prayer, and tender loving care on our husband's behalf—is an essential means of home and kingdom building that brings lasting rewards: “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Hebrews 6:10, KJV). Additionally, blessing our husband:

- enables us to “do what we can do” even as we lift our unmet needs, innermost desires, and private concerns to God
- turns our eyes toward the solution for the helplessness we feel when God asks us to abandon our well-meaning but futile attempts to direct, lead, steer, or otherwise reroute our husband's life
- helps us walk with our husband through his defeats and triumphs in the strength of God's grace as we depend on the Holy Spirit's timely guidance and assistance

- teaches us the wisdom of waiting, listening, and looking for God's answers to our questions and concerns regarding our husband
- leads us to our Father's protective pastures for the Shepherd's safekeeping, the only place where we unflinchingly find trouble-free rest for our souls

Jesus modeled the concept of blessing for His disciples when He broke bread with them, cooked fish for them, and spoke of His Father's love and purposes for them. Jesus lived to do the will of His Father; He did not function independently but maintained the vital connection with His Father in heaven. In Christ's active and obedient ministry to others, we have a perfect example of the kind of active love on which the good work of blessing our husband is based.

By deciding to read *Blessing Your Husband*, you have expressed a desire to strengthen the bond you share with your husband. You honor the commitment you made on that memorable day when your lives were joined together in Christ. You recognize the importance of your role as a wife and realize, as I do, that this consecrated union is the most influential, exclusive, revealing, meaningful, and humbling relationship in your life. Whether you have been married for days or years, you understand that your words, actions, attitudes, and prayers have a big impact on your husband, your heart, and your marriage. It's my hope that you'll receive an ample dose of encouragement as you read this book and spend time thinking about ways to fortify the vital connection you share with your spouse.

I stand with you in your effort! I did not write *Blessing Your Husband* because I think I have all the answers (does anyone?) or because I can claim that my thirty-seven years of wifely experience have been completely free of stress, strain, and disappointment. I wrote these pages because I want to, as loudly and clearly as I can, cheer you on toward reinforcing, valuing, and protecting your marriage bond. I want to affirm the eternal worth of your wifely role, and to ever so gently remind you that a successful, meaningful marriage *is* possible if you aren't afraid to ask God repeatedly for His help, strength, mercy, and wisdom.

It is my hope that this book will provide you with the tools you need to grow closer to God and to your husband. Each chapter ends

with several reflection and action points, and I urge you to set aside focused time as you can—perhaps weekly—with these:

- Focus Points—summaries of the most important points from each chapter for quick review.
- Words to Remember—scriptures to live by and meditate upon as you spend time with the Lord.
- Real Guys—thoughts from husbands about what their wife does that truly blesses them.
- Personal Reflections—questions and journal exercises to help you think more deeply and personally about how certain principles apply to your marriage.
- Prayers—adapted from Scripture and from the classics to assist you as you pray for your husband and your marriage. You might consider copying these onto index cards and placing them strategically in your purse, bathroom, kitchen, car, office, or wherever you will see them often.
- Blessings Now—collected ideas from which you can choose simple blessings to begin extending to your husband today.
- For Further Reading—a recommended reading list of books that will take you deeper into the issues discussed in each chapter. While the Christian books on this list are excellent in my opinion, they represent a variety of perspectives, so focus on those that are personally helpful to you in your efforts to strengthen your marriage. Out-of-print books can often be located through libraries, used bookstores, and online booksellers.

As we place Jesus above all other relationships and personal interests, we receive the grace to grow up into Christ as well as into our marriage—to increasingly surrender our biases, self-centeredness, and score-keeping. In doing so, we experience the freedom that allows us to bless our husband not only with wisdom, but also with dignity and joy.





PART I

*Reality*  
Check







ONE

# Married Outside of Eden



*Marriage is not simply the luck of the draw, or something that we get involved in which just unfolds before us like a long movie. Good marriages, like good individual lives or good art, are conscious creations. They are made.*

KEVIN AND MARILYN RYAN

Do you sometimes wish you could once and for all insulate your marriage from failure and frustration, that you could shock-proof your sacred bond? Do you ever long for spiritual shortcuts on the road to holiness together?

Our easily distracted human heart seeks the easy detours. Whether living our life or loving our husband, we prefer wide, paved roads to the rugged, step-by-step path that requires us to continually seek and submit to God's will, pray about everything, get help when we need it, thank God for *all* He has done, and travel on.

But marriage, of course, isn't a smoothly paved, predictable journey; it's a bumpy love-in-action relationship filled with disorienting roadside challenges and constant surprises. Wedded life requires strenuous, open-hearted endurance—a continuing, conscious effort to remain obedient to

God's transforming work in our life—over hundreds of months and thousands of days. A healthy marriage can't be built *immediately*, but it *can* be built. Couples committed to creating one must carefully construct and cement their bond, layer by layer.

### **Arduous Demands and Astonishing Surprises**

"The divine design is no mistake," writes Gladys Hunt, author of *Ms. Means Myself*. "The mutual attraction of male and female calls us to confront our aloneness, out of our independence to see that we need each other. It is the foundation of human history. We are meant to enhance each other, to affirm the other's personhood and to discover that in our mutual dependence we solve the mystery of our existence."<sup>1</sup>

The exclusive intimacy marriage requires is obviously part of God's plan for us. Even so, loving our husband—*genuinely* loving him accord-




---

### *The Truth about Marriage*

Marriage is the closest bond that is possible between two human beings. That, at least, was the original idea behind it. It was to be something unique, without parallel or precedent. In the sheer sweep and radical abandon of its commitment, it was to transcend every other form of human union on earth, every other covenant that could possibly be made between two people. Friendship, parent-child, master-pupil—marriage would surpass all these other bonds in a whole constellation of remarkable ways, including equality of the partners, permanent commitment, cohabitation, sexual relations, and the spontaneous creation of blood ties through simple spoken promises. As it was originally designed, marriage was a union to end all unions, the very last word, and the first, in human intimacy. Socially, legally, physically, emotionally, every which way, there is just no other means of getting closer to another human being, and never has been, than in marriage.

Such extraordinary closeness is bought at a cost, and the cost is nothing

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ing to the way love is defined in the New Testament—doesn't come naturally for any of us. When our husband disagrees with us, offends us, or annoys us, our desire to continuously care for and cherish him is challenged. This, too, is part of God's plan for us: learning what love is, and what it's not, within the incredibly instructive context of marriage.

“Scriptures give us careful, meticulous descriptions of the many aspects of love,” Stuart and Jill Briscoe point out in *Living Love*. “It’s important to take a close look at the sixteen descriptions of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and not get sidetracked when reading it simply because it is so familiar or so beautiful. There are rugged, abrasive qualities in this passage that describe what love really is when it is in operation.... Love is not primarily something that you feel. You cannot love with God’s love, merely by oohing and aaahing over the ‘love chapter.’ The Scriptures require action.”<sup>2</sup>

Marriage is full of staggering wonder and risk, incomprehensible

more or less than one’s own self. No one has ever married without being shocked at the enormity of this price and the monstrous inconvenience of this thing called intimacy which suddenly invades their life.... All of life is, in one way or another, humbling. But there is nothing like the experience of being humbled by another person, and by the same person day in and day out. It can be exhausting, unnerving, infuriating, disintegrating. There is no suffering like the suffering involved in being close to another person. But neither is there any joy nor any real comfort at all outside of intimacy, outside the joy and comfort that are wrung out like wine from the crush and ferment of two lives being pressed together....

The truth about marriage is that it is a way not of avoiding any of the painful trials and subtractions of life, but rather of confronting them, of exposing and tackling them most intimately, most humanly. It is a way to meet suffering personally, head on, with the peculiar directness, the reckless candidness characteristic only of love. It is a way of living life with no other strategy or defense or protection than that of love.... Marriage is a way not to evade suffering, but to suffer purposefully.<sup>3</sup>—Mike Mason



mystery and surprise, unique joys and sorrows. Over the course of a marriage, life can be amazingly serene at certain moments, completely exasperating at others. Given the imperfect, fallen world we live in, every day we face the startling possibility that we will experience the effects of sin, loss, and disappointment. As Eve's daughters, our marriage makes its way outside of Eden.

The apostle Paul expressed this reality well when he wrote, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" (Romans 8:22). What a powerful statement! As a veteran childbirth educator and the mother of four children, my heart almost skips a beat when I read this Bible passage. *The whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth as it awaits its final redemption from the effects of the Fall*—and it still is. Can you hear the groaning?

Though it's easy on difficult days to forget our ultimate goal, our labor and our groans are deeply productive where God's eternal purpose for us is concerned: "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

### **The Real Task at Hand**

Do you believe God is productively and perfectly working for the good of your marriage, for your husband, and for you? Do you daily trust God to shape and design your husband's life—and also your own?

I don't know about you, but when I experience frustration or anger regarding my husband's attitudes or actions, I usually slip into Control Mode. I tend to cope with both big and small concerns about my spouse by subtly (or not so subtly) attempting to redirect, reorganize, and redecorate him. When things start getting messy, I want to straighten up my husband's life.

For example, when David drives too fast, I tend to sigh loudly, raise my eyebrows in disapproval, and point out the obvious speed limit signs. Even though I know my tendency will fail to transform his

driving, I would like to spare both of us the embarrassment and expense of a traffic citation. It's hard for me not to say anything to my husband, even though one well-timed speeding ticket would have a far greater effect on David's driving than all my sighs, eyebrow raising, and finger pointing combined. As you can imagine, this same principle applies to any number of areas of our life together.

I realize my behavior seems fairly ridiculous. After all, what educated woman treats her husband as if he were a continuing interior design challenge? I can't help but think that if Eve had been completely content with Adam, God, and herself, she might never have presumed to eat the forbidden fruit, nor would she have offered "just a tiny bite" to her husband.

Perhaps you, too, see the problem. This age-old behavior pattern concerning husband improvement is, I suspect, something I share with many women, including my famous foremother from the Garden of Eden.

Regardless of how much we love our husband, we will dislike certain things about him, as he will dislike certain things about us. If we lay down our desire to control, however, and open our heart to see our husband as he really is rather than focusing on who we want him to be, our ability to love and forgive and bless him will grow. When we accept the responsibility of understanding and appreciating our husband's uniqueness—the sum total of his singular spiritual, physical, psychological, and social attributes—our focus remains where it belongs: on God, and on His unchanging purposes and promises for our marriage, our husband, and ourself.

The inconstant world where we negotiate our *en route* existence is not what it once was, nor what it will one day be. Life, like labor, is full of arduous demands and astonishing surprises. We live in a physically, emotionally, and spiritually trying environment that C. S. Lewis, the inspired British writer and philosopher, called "the shadowlands." Our daily pilgrimage unfolds in a varied landscape of not-yet-fully illuminated places that continually challenge us to go deeper, go further, with God. If we rise to the challenge, we can expect to see and understand better His life-giving, glorious reality.

### FOCUS POINTS

- Wedded life requires a continuing, conscious effort to remain obedient to God's transforming work in our life. God is productively and perfectly working for the good of your marriage, for your husband, and for you.
- Given the imperfect, fallen world we live in, every day we face the startling possibility that we will experience the effects of sin, loss, and disappointment. But our labor and our groans are deeply productive where God's eternal purpose for us is concerned.
- If we lay down our desire to control our husband—if we open our heart to see him as he really is rather than focusing on who we want him to be—our ability to love and forgive and bless him will grow.
- When we accept the responsibility of understanding and appreciating our husband's uniqueness, our attention remains where it belongs: on God and on His unchanging purposes and promises for our marriage, our husband, and ourselves.

### WORDS TO REMEMBER

- The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made. (Psalm 145:13)
- Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. (Ephesians 5:15-17)
- Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands. (Psalm 119:73)
- Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children. (Ephesians 5:1)

### REAL GUYS

“Kind, helpful, and unselfish actions always lift my spirits emotionally, spiritually, and even physically. But one thing transcends the attention focused upon me. I have heard friends of my wife comment, ‘What a great husband you have!’ Others tell me directly,



‘What a wonderful relationship you and your wife must have.’ You see, it’s not only that she has done something to me to be a blessing, but that she has acknowledged to other people the blessing of what we have together.”—Jim

### PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

1. At what point in your marriage, if ever, do you first remember thinking, “This is harder than I thought it was going to be”? How did God help you keep going? What have you learned along the way?
2. Complete these thoughts in your journal:  
*The destination we’re aiming for in our marriage is...*  
*On difficult days, it helps to remember...*  
*God met me at a point of need in my marriage when...*
3. If you’re currently struggling with an annoying character trait or habit that’s really bugging you about your husband and it’s clear he isn’t interested in making a change right now, what will you do to relieve your feelings of anger, hurt, or frustration? Record your thoughts and feelings and prayers—for your eyes only.

### PRAYERS

#### *Praying God’s Blessing for Our Marriage\**

God, be gracious to us and bless us and make your face shine upon us, that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.—Psalm 67:1-2

#### *Praying God’s Blessing for My Husband\**

God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip my husband with every good thing for doing your will, and may you work in my husband what is pleasing to you, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.—Hebrews 13:20-21

#### *Closing Prayer*

O God of patience and consolation, give us such goodwill, we beseech Thee, that with free hearts we may love and serve Thee and our brethren; and, having thus the mind of Christ, may begin heaven

on earth, and exercise ourselves therein till that day when heaven where love abideth shall seem no strange habitation to us. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.<sup>4</sup>—Christina G. Rossetti (1830-1895)

\*Pronouns in all end-of-chapter prayers for blessing are personalized.

### BLESSINGS NOW

- Open your heart to seeing your husband as he is in his Father's eyes rather than thinking about who you want him to be.
- Nurture emotional as well as physical intimacy. Touch your husband while silently praying for his physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.
- Admit it when you realize you're wrong: "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16).
- For at least one day, set aside thoughts of your husband's faults or shortcomings. Focus instead on God's unchanging promises and purposes for him.
- Try to understand your husband's opinion during a disagreement or dispute. Aim to make allowances for the differences between you.
- Extend grace in place of negative criticism: Identify one thing about your husband that really bugs you and decide from this day forward you will avoid trying to change this particular behavior.
- Encourage your partner to play. Ask him what he would like to do with his evening, then help protect his time by taking his phone calls and limiting interruptions.
- Avoid taking your husband for granted today. Express your appreciation for your beloved by putting your love into action on his behalf in some noticeable, new way.
- Slow down. Savor a quiet moment together behind closed doors.
- Boldly go where no woman has gone before: Invite your husband to imagine a future with you in which you picture growing old together. Talk about your hopes, dreams, and fears about turning 30 . . . 40 . . . 50 . . . 60 . . . 70 and beyond.

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