

Lesson 3

CHOOSING TO UNDERSTAND YOUR HUSBAND

The goals of this lesson are to:

- ↻ Understand the innate drives and wiring of our husband.
- ↻ With respect to this distinctly male wiring, to identify how we can engage and influence our husband for his good.

Day 1

(Note, this day is longer than usual.)

The Distinct Drives of a Man

We all long to understand our mate better and be closely bonded with him. To be able to do this, we will again go back to our original model or archetype – Adam – to find out the general creation principles that apply to all men. You will never understand your husband or be able to meet his needs unless you know what his true needs are – not what the latest group of experts or pop psychologists have come up with.

According to Focusing on Christian Womanhood every man has four basic drives that have their origin in Scripture and which bring him a sense of fulfillment when he responds to them. If you want to understand your husband better, you need to understand these innate drives and cooperate with them rather than fight against them. A man's ego also reflects these drives. Consider this definition of the male ego:

The instincts God has put within a man that lead him to do God's will; his instinctive "maleness", the self-respect which comes from the proper use of these instincts.

Genesis 1:26-28, and Genesis 2:15 is the Scripture which refers to the origin of these drives:

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the

fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

“Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.”

Here we see four distinct drives that man was created to fulfill:

1. **Subdue and Rule the earth**
2. **Multiply and Fill the earth**
3. **Dress (Tend, Care For)**
4. **Keep (Guard)**

The first two of these commands are addressed to the man and woman. Both were commissioned to rule the earth God had created, but each will go about it in different ways. In this lesson we will be addressing the man's drives, and in lesson four the woman's drives.

Subdue and Rule

The drive to subdue and rule as presented in Genesis 1:28 is displayed in many areas in a man's life, but we are going to focus on two:

- ☞ His general desire to take on challenges and conquer them successfully
- ☞ His need to provide for himself and his family

His Work

His general desire to conquer is displayed by man's interest in bringing the forces of nature under his control, accepting challenges, understanding and being interested in machines and technology, taking things apart and seeing how they work, having curiosity about principles of nature, abstract ideas and scientific thinking. A man's outlet for this drive to conquer and take on a challenge is generally related to a man's job and the satisfaction he derives from doing a good job. We are going to look at some of Shaunti Feldhahn's research about men and work in this lesson. A wise woman will tune her attention some of the most articulate men she researched because your husband very likely feels this way but is unable to put it into these words himself. What you are about to learn, if you are open, could give you a fundamentally different perspective about the monumental impact his work has on him. You can understand why sometimes when he comes home from work he may seem withdrawn or unable to be the husband and father you want him to be and how your influence can be game-changing.

This drive to conquer is also related to the “provider” instinct that is found in Genesis 2:15 *“Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.”* The New Testament confirms that God has assigned man the responsibility of providing for his family by rebuking the man who fails to provide for his family. *“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.”* 1 Timothy 5:8. Notice that this warning was not given to the woman, but to the man. Man’s work is a blessing. It provides him with the opportunity to develop his God-given abilities as he faces struggles, burdens and difficulties for his family. ¹

In *For Women Only*, Shaunti explains the connection between:

1. Man’s desire to take on a challenge (work),
2. His emotional need to feel adequate,
3. And therefore his heightened sensitivity to signals that someone views him as inadequate.

His Desire for Challenges

First, with respect to his need to provide for us, we must be careful not to deny our husband the respect, the honor, and the deep satisfaction of fulfilling this role God assigned him. In her research and interviews with thousands of men, Shaunti found that *providing is foundational to manhood*.

Consider the stunning results from the survey: a man’s need to provide goes so deep that even if you did bring home enough money to nicely support the whole family, your man would probably still feel compelled to provide. When asked: Suppose your wife/significant other earned enough to support your family’s lifestyle. Would you still feel a compulsion to provide for your family? 78% said Yes and only 22% said No.

... Being a provider appears to be at the core of a man’s identity as a male and as a person of worth: he feels that to be a man, he needs to be a provider. ... Men feel powerful when they provide. And they want to be depended on. The ability to take care of those they feel responsible for lies at the very center of their sense of personal significance. Providing for those he loves is not just what a man does for a living – in a unique way, it is an enormous part of who he is. ²

Men feel powerful when they provide. One man expressed to Shaunti the intense feeling of the need to provide this way: “About sex, men are pretty utilitarian and women are emotional. About money, work, or providing, women are utilitarian, but men get emotional!” ³

His Emotional Need to Feel Adequate

Unfortunately, the effect of sin brings with it a curse on our man's efforts to take on work and challenges through a hidden fear of failure. All men, even the most confident, have a *general anxiety* of not being able to successfully tackle at least *some* of his challenges at hand, and then being found out to be inadequate.

Most men have an inner vulnerability that we don't even know is there, stemming from a set of competing core needs and fears. Something deep inside them wants to tackle a great challenge and try difficult things... But at the same time, they find the idea of failing excruciating. One of their greatest emotional needs is to feel competent and successful at what they do, especially in front of others... But at the same time, they have a deep conviction that what they do is always being watched and judged. Hence the reason for this is deep, unseen insecurity: they so deeply want to succeed but feel that they are one mess-up from being found out. ...This inner uncertainty leaves even the most confident-seeming man dreading the moment when he will be exposed for who he really is – or at least believes himself to be. An impostor. ⁴

Shaunti goes on to explain that the risk of failing or losing his ability to provide is a *constant* worry.

... Furthermore, a large majority of men (71 percent) say that their responsibility to provide is always or often on their minds. Think about what it must feel like to be conscious of this burden most of the time! Because of this dynamic, men constantly worry about failure at work, layoffs, or a downturn in business. Since a majority of men (61%) said they regularly felt unappreciated at work, it appears that many truly think they are at risk. ... If the worst happens and the family encounters financial problems, your man feels like a failure. Even if the financial problems have nothing to do with him (say, for example, his biggest client went out of business), if the result is that you have to adjust your lifestyle, can't buy the children the birthday present they asked for, or have trouble paying the mortgage, he suffers emotional torture. ⁵

But the good news is, God gave him a companion, and as his wife, you hold a key to his ability to conquer those fears. Take an interest in his job and the dynamics at his workplace. If his job is at greater risk for any reason, he will likely come home depleted, needing some time alone or he may need more

attentiveness than usual to rejuvenate. Remind him of the truth about his strengths when he's discouraged. Celebrate his successes and revisit them with him when he feels vulnerable about his job. Be a listening ear without judging when he needs to vent about work. Be cautious about criticizing him or even offering suggestions for improvement especially in his areas of insecurity.

Day 1 Homework

Prayer Request: *Ask the Lord to reveal to you how your husband perceives your words and actions.*

1. No matter how successful our husband may be in his work, there will be some days our husband comes home from work exhausted and for some of us our husband may be burned out or hate his job and daily come home withdrawn, irritable, and unable to give anything to the relationship or the family. Based on the following verses write down how God wants us to relate to our husband in that situation.

Philippians 2:3-7

Colossians 3:9, 12-15

2. Consider your own husband. If providing is how he expresses his love for you, imagine his pain if you complain about the long hours at work, accusing him of not loving you, when the long hours are *because* he loves. Or how does it feel if you rarely ask about his work, the part of his life that is at the core of his identity as a man? Or does he prefer not to talk about his work with you because he doesn't feel safe, fearing criticism? Does he know how much his provision is appreciated or does he hear complaints about not having enough money, or dissatisfaction with what he can provide? Record below what, if anything, you are saying or doing that may be perceived unintentionally as a) belittling

your husband's role as provider or b) dissatisfaction with his provision?
How can you encourage him in his role as provider?

3. Whether you work outside the home or not, to contribute to the household income, in what ways could you convey to your husband that you need him, still look to him, and respect his role as provider?

4. Record the answers to these questions below. If you aren't sure of the answers, consider asking your husband. What does your husband do for a living? What would he consider his most significant successes in his career? How does he feel about his work – does he feel valued at work, or does he feel vulnerable to losing his job? Does he feel safe to talk to you about his workday?

Day 2

When Eve succumbed to the tempter's clever argument, Adam proved once and for all that the creature called woman holds within her being a particular power to influence. He proved this by succumbing right along with her. He didn't have to do it. He, too, was a creature with free choice; but the fact remains that he did, leaving us to face another irrevocable fact: that while each human being is morally responsible to God for himself alone, women do have a special responsibility to see to it that their lives influence those around them in a way which God can accept. ⁶ Eugenia Price

Unchanged Male Design in a Changing World

In the age of the modern family the roles of women have changed dramatically. Many of you are working part-time or full-time and some of you may be the primary bread-winner while some of you are full time stay at home moms. We must recognize the fact that regardless of our lifestyles and work scenarios today, *God's wiring of men has not changed.*

As we have seen in Day 1, the male provider instinct is a constant burden all men carry and frequently think about. That instinct plays nicely with God's design of men because they want to take on a challenge. However, we also saw that as the result of the fall he has a fear that he may be found inadequate to successfully take on those challenges. Today we continue with a few more aspects related to men and their work.

His Heightened Sensitivity to Feeling Inadequate

Men live with this tension: His greatest NEED is to feel able and good at what he does, therefore his greatest FEAR is to be seen inadequate. In her book *The Male Factor: The Unwritten Rules, Misperceptions, and Secret Beliefs of Men in the Workplace* Shaunti Feldhahn interviewed and surveyed thousands of men about their secret beliefs and perceptions of women in the workplace. When Shaunti explains in her training to corporate women the tie between insecurity and respect she is always intrigued at how quickly women see the personal application of this concept to their husbands.

“One of the main reasons men crave respect is because it mitigates their underlying sense of insecurity. One man whom I will call Gary offered a vivid metaphor. Insecurity is sort of like having a bad back, where the disability is always chronic. You've learned to live with it. You don't like it, but you do things to compensate for it. Versus disrespect, which

is where someone comes along and slugs me right on the sensitive part of my back and the pain is sharp. I can manage the constant ache of the insecurity, but I'm going to do whatever I can to avoid that intense pain." ⁷

Shaunti uncovered seven unintentional signals of disrespect that men perceive, in her research and interviews. First and foremost the men told her repeatedly that it's not what you say, but how you say it. So here are seven "how you do it" situations that men are just as likely to perceive as disrespect in the home as at the office.

1. A direct, brusque approach – men distinguish between the kind of directness that is confrontational, and just being direct in the interest of time.
2. Believing a decision wasn't based on a legitimate reason, and often women define 'legitimate' as a reason she agrees with.
3. Asking 'why did you' questions instead of 'help me understand' questions – he hears 'why' as saying he didn't have a reason for doing what he did and that he's an idiot.
4. Pushing your ideas or way too much – Explaining your viewpoint three different ways or coming back to it repeatedly over a short period of time is seen as a complete disregard or derision of his decision or opinion. Is he *wrong* or do you simply have a difference of opinion?
5. Exasperation – sighs of irritation, rolling your eyes, any kind of body language that signals the kind of disrespect that makes a man feel like you're saying he's a child.
6. Micromanagement – checking in often, giving too many details on how to do things (like the laundry list of 10 steps to taking care of the kids for a night while you go out).
7. Direct "corrective" disagreement – especially challenging or correcting him in front of others (even the kids) feels disrespectful, while 'Do you mind if I mention one thing I'm concerned about?' comes across as a respectful approach. ⁸

Your husband is very likely even *more sensitive* to feeling disrespected at home if he is disrespected at work by women who inadvertently treat him in a way that no man would treat another man. Conversely, if he feels inadequate or disrespected at home, he will be hypersensitive at work (which is a disadvantage) to anyone who makes him feel incompetent, intentionally or unintentionally.

Because of our unique position of influence in our husband's life, we have the ability to speak life or death into this insecurity: we can express utter

confidence about his ability to succeed or criticize him about his abilities as a father, a spouse, an athlete, or provider, etc., which only adds to the insecurity he already carries daily. But this is *especially* torturous and debilitating if he has experienced a layoff or setback in his career. He needs your support, encouragement, praise, confidence, and cheerfulness at this time to assure him that you are on his team and you believe in him. This is the kind of companion God intended him to have. If your husband appears to have no desire to work or provide, it's most likely because he has lost his confidence and feels he can't succeed, so why try. What an incredible position of power with great responsibility God has given to us women. Use it for His glory and the good of your man.

The World Will Stop Spinning

Again referring to Shaunti's book, *The Male Factor*, a group of men tried to convey to Shaunti how *compulsive* men feel about the need to provide for their families and how often they think about their jobs and their ability to bring home a paycheck. She had asked these men what makes that mental pressure to provide for your family worse, and it seemed that everything they mentioned was so petty and insignificant that she asked them to explain. One man tried to elaborate:

*"Any interruption at work feels like it might prevent me from being able to provide for my family. I know that sounds crazy. While my direct reports are arguing with each other in a meeting, I'm thinking, Don't you get it? While you're fussing about something irrelevant, my work is not getting done! And if my work is not done, I'm going to lose this client and my numbers will drop. And if my numbers drop, I'm going to get fired. And if I get fired, I'm going to go bankrupt, and I won't be able to provide for my family and my wife will leave me and the glaciers will melt and the world will stop spinning on its axis, and life on earth will cease to exist as we know it."*⁹

There are times that our husbands seem preoccupied with work and seemingly neglecting his family for his work. But most often the work is *because* of his family, *for* his family because his work *must* succeed to keep his family. As one man put it, "If I don't bust my butt today, I may be bankrupt tomorrow. We know it's stupid, so you'll never hear us talk about it, but that is kind of how every guy feels."¹⁰

Work World Vs. Personal World

One more principle of men in the workplace is something completely foreign and contradictory to women. For women we have one big world, and in that world we have personal life, relationships, and our work. It's all rolled into one big world. But for men there are two separate worlds: there's personal world and work world, and the two are distinctly separate. When he gets in the car and goes to work it's like he drives over a bridge that separates these two worlds and when he gets out of the car and walks into his work building, he leaves personal world and enters work world. Things that take his mind off of work and back to personal world are viewed as a detrimental distraction from his work. That pressure that the world will stop spinning if all hands aren't on deck at all times while working makes it difficult for him to pull out of work world and back into personal world. How many times do we call or text our husband at work with an update from our kid's school, or a honey-do item, or to report some broken appliance, or the latest melt-down experience at home, etc.? If he doesn't want you to call him at work or doesn't take your calls while working, it's very likely he feels like 'the world might stop spinning.' He's in a separate world and his mind is focused on work. Do not get your feelings hurt, but rather support him in understanding his world. That transition between work world and personal world may be easier for some personalities, positions, or even industries of work, but this is generally true for most men.

Reversing the Curse of Sin

For men: work is everything because men are defined by what they do. For women: relationships are everything because we are defined by who are, which we usually determine by how loved we feel in our relationships especially with our husband. Of course who we are *should* be defined by our position in Christ, and yet we live in a fallen world with fallen spouses and many times we fail to live in accord with our position in Christ. As a wife, we have that unique ability to respond to these work place struggles our husband's face in a way that redirects him to the *truth* about who he is in Christ, his strengths, his successes, his situation, etc. We can lighten his burden or we can add to it. Choose to understand your husband and help reverse the curse of sin.

What Kind of Influence Will You Be For Your Husband?

We *are* an influence. The question is - what kind? Are we on the same team? Even though you work too and at the end of a day you're tired, in this lesson we are focusing on how to better understand our husbands. From Focusing on Christian Womanhood here are some suggestions for influencing your husband for good with respect to his work and provision:

- ❧ ***Demonstrate an attitude of contentment for the level of provision your husband and you can make.*** The best way you can help your husband is sincere gratitude for his provision for you and your family.
- ❧ ***Learn about your husband's work and acknowledge how hard he works.*** What dreams and goals does he have in regard to his job? What are some disappointments and struggles he has recently faced in connection with his work?
- ❧ ***Appreciate the mental and emotional stress in today's highly competitive society.*** When men come home, they need a place where they can feel safe from criticism or unfavorable comparisons.
- ❧ ***Many jobs don't offer the satisfaction or command the respect they once did.*** You may be the only person to show admiration for his work or offer him encouragement.
- ❧ ***Make your home the kind of place he needs to come home to after a hard day of work.*** After a hard day, what would your husband appreciate coming home to? Talk about this together.
- ❧ ***A man needs to be needed; to have a purpose.*** Being needed and appreciated by his wife can give him significance and purpose. A sense of being needed can especially be a problem if his wife is making her own money or she makes more money than him, which is not uncommon in today's workplace. It takes a remarkable woman and a special effort to be a working wife and mother who doesn't make her husband feel inferior or that he has failed as a provider. At the same time she must maintain emotional closeness with both husband and children, and in addition, keep things going in the home.
- ❧ ***Don't ridicule or silence his expression of his dreams,*** such as owning his own business or plans for retirement. They may help him survive through an unsatisfying job. Instead, help him find ways to make his dreams reality.

Day 2 Homework

Prayer Request: Ask God to help you identify the situations where you are using your role of influence with your husband for good or for bad.

1. The Bible straightforwardly tells the truth about people. Read the verses below and record your observations of how different women influenced or provoked their husbands.

Genesis 16:1-6 _____

Genesis 30:1-2 _____

1 Kings 21:25-26 _____

2 Chronicles 21:5-6 _____

Proverbs 31:10-12 _____

2. In what areas of our relationship do I tend to control or manipulate my husband?

3. Reread the boxed quote at the beginning of this lesson and answer the following question: How do you tend to influence your spouse (in words or actions or attitude) positively? Negatively?

4. In the seven signals of unintentional disrespect, list your husband's 'hot buttons' below. Pick one and write out how you can change your response to your husband.

5. Ladies it is not possible to overemphasize the significance of understanding that the wife is given to the husband to support him, to be his helpmate. The husband is not given to the wife to be her support. Sometimes we become so preoccupied with our own concerns that we forget the pressures our husbands face. The following from Focusing on Christian Womanhood is a good reminder of some of the pressures that many husbands face each day. **After reviewing it, write a note to your husband and compliment and encourage him regarding his work (the quality and or quantity) and use this exercise as a catalyst to encourage him in his work more often.**

Workplace Pressures

- ↻ Inefficiency of employees or co-workers and related problems
- ↻ Rude or demanding people in general
- ↻ Demands by the boss for a completed project now
- ↻ The chain of delays that hinder his work
- ↻ Competition for job advancement
- ↻ Lack of promotion opportunity
- ↻ Meeting sales goals or deals still incomplete
- ↻ Insecurity due to downsizing
- ↻ Job security vs. other opportunities
- ↻ Traffic and wasted commute time

Home Pressures

- ↻ Odd jobs and yard work requiring his attention
- ↻ Car maintenance and repair
- ↻ Needed home improvements and repairs or maintenance
- ↻ Community and church commitments
- ↻ Lack of rapport with the children
- ↻ Pressure due to lack of time for communication with his wife

Financial Pressures

- ↻ Bills and taxes
- ↻ Savings for future (retirement, vacations, etc.)
- ↻ Cost of food, clothing and utilities
- ↻ Whether to perform home repairs himself or hire them out – is the loss of time worth the saving?

Physical Pressures

- ↻ Advancing age
- ↻ Maintenance of virility
- ↻ Maintenance of physical capacities necessary for his job
- ↻ Fatigue¹¹

Day 3

Today's study, taken from *Focusing on Christian Womanhood*, continues to the next three drives God created in our men.

Multiplying

In Genesis 1:28 we see the directive from God to multiply and replenish the Earth. Many women have made the statement that all their husbands seem interested in is sex. There is a good reason for that. That is how God has wired him! If you are commanded to multiply and replenish the earth, it would make sense that sex would be at the top of man's basic needs. And if a woman doesn't understand that a man has a strong sex drive and isn't willing to meet that need, she may well create great difficulties in her marriage. In 1 Corinthians 7:3, Paul says, *"Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to the husband."* The revised version translates "duty" as "conjugal rights." These terms, duty and conjugal rights, don't sound very exciting, but what this really means is that you are not to withhold pleasure that is rightfully owed each other. In other words, we are to enjoy one another sexually.

Sex is also an emotional necessity – it is a tool from the hands of God to keep couples close. It is one of the most important ways of bonding with your mate where the two can become one. It is also a time of the greatest intimacy during which men feel freer to express themselves.

Shaunti found in her research for her book, *For Women Only*, that sex for men fulfills an emotional need.

"In a very deep way, your man often feels isolated and burdened by secret feelings of inadequacy. Making love with you assures him that you find him desirable, salves a deep sense of loneliness, and gives him the strength and well-being necessary to face the world with confidence. And, of course, sex also makes him feel loved – in fact, he can't feel completely loved without it. At the most basic level, your man wants to be wanted." On her nationally representative survey of men Shaunti found, "97 percent of men said getting enough sex wasn't, by itself, enough – they wanted to feel wanted." ⁷

We will cover this subject at length in a few weeks.

Dressing (Tending)

"Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it." Genesis 2:15

In this verse we see the last two drives to dress/tend and to protect/guard. This desire to dress or tend is seen in Genesis 2:15 *"Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it."* Adam was given a place of his very own – a territory for which he alone was to be responsible. This expresses itself in man's territorial drive. Every man needs a territory of his own – The Man Cave. This drive is also provided for in Genesis 2:24: *"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife."* Implicit in this command is that man would go out and establish his own territory and set up his own household with his wife.

Every man has the drive to dress and keep (or tend and guard) a place for which he alone is responsible. In the animal kingdom, a male will often stake out his own territory and will fight to the death any other male who intrudes. This is a strong instinct, sometimes even stronger than the mating instinct.

Each man's home should be a safe place where he can find satisfaction in fulfilling these drives God gave him. It should be the place where a man can refresh himself and prepare to meet the pressures of the outside world – not a place where he is put under *increased* pressure. Think about your home today. Does he think of it as "our house", or does he think of it as "the wife's house?" Can he relax anywhere without feeling guilty or being worried that he is messing things up? Sometimes if a man isn't allowed to express these drives in his own home, he will find a den, a workshop, a garage, a car, where he can have his own territory.

Keeping (Guarding)

The final drive is essentially the desire to protect. In our current culture, this drive doesn't find expression in men like it used to, probably because women are so much more independent today (possibly too independent.) But consider the following ways that your husband may seek to protect you even in our modern day of independence, and ask yourself if you find that you resist or cooperate with this protection.

- ☞ **Physically** – He can help you by being aware of when you need to slow your pace to prevent fatigue and exhaustion. Listen when he offers concerns about your safety when traveling out of town or late at night.
- ☞ **Mentally** – He can protect you from taking on too many outside responsibilities leading to over commitment. Ask him to help you decide what extras to take on and also to determine what you need to change when you are feeling tired and overcommitted.
- ☞ **Emotionally** – Although our emotions are a wonderful part of our femininity, we often encounter situations that subject us to excessive emotional pressure and we need to allow our husbands to deal with

them – issues such as overbearing teenagers or conflicts with family or neighbors. Trust your husband to help you identify situations and relationships that drain you and need some boundaries.

- ☞ **Spiritually** – If he is a Christian, talk together about where you are growing or need to grow and trust God. Work on developing an ongoing awareness of where each of you is struggling spiritually.

God planned for your husband to stand between you and the world to protect you from the physical, emotional and spiritual pressures that are harmful to you. As an example of a husband's protection, the story is told about a wife who was always the life of the party and afterwards would regret how much she had talked and monopolized the conversation during the evening. Realizing the consequences of that, she asked her husband to help to protect her from herself in this matter. They developed a signal between them that they would use in social situations to communicate when he felt she had said enough.

Responding to The Four Drives

In summary, we need to accept all four of these God-given drives (Subdue and Rule, Multiply, Tend/Keep, Protect/Guard) and break the habit of ascribing wrong motives to his drives. When you see these drives being properly used, strengthen them by affirming him with compliments.

If you have concerns about whether you are stepping into your husband's role, ask yourself these three questions:

1. Is there a clear teaching in Scripture about this matter?
2. Is it contrary to God's purpose in my creation? Will my physical, mental, or emotional well being suffer if I do this?
3. Is my behavior deflating my husband's ego? No man can honestly feel good when he is letting his wife do what he knows God created him to do.

Ever since the fall, man's drives have become a problem to him and he has devised ways of misusing them, such as sexual promiscuity or a desire to exercise dominion not only over his things, but to control things which belong to another man's territory. However, this does not alter the fact that men still need these drives to be what God wants them to be. If a woman is careful that her attitude does not cause her husband to use his drives in the wrong way, she can trust God to correct any misuse of these drives. We trust God with so many other things – why not trust Him to take care of this too? Although we are affected by them, faults that our husbands have are really between him and God. Why not pray and let God take care of it – in His time and His way? ¹²

Day 3 Homework

Prayer Request: *Ask God to give you a heart that desires to yield 'ownership' of your home so your husband has his own space, and feels the home is as much his as it is yours.*

1. Ask your husband what he considers his territory. He may put great care in the yard and consider that this is his territory. It could be his job, his car, a workshop, a special chair, or even a collection of some kind. Does he have or would he like to have an area in your home that is 'his territory' that he can 'dress and tend' the way he wants?

2. Why do you think men need a territory?

3. Does the décor of your home reflect a combination of the tastes of both of you or just yours?

4. Do you throw away or store out of sight items that mean a great deal to your husband, such as trophies, hobbies, pictures?

5. Read Proverbs 14:1. List ways you really want to begin “building your house...”

6. List any ways you now realize you may have been tearing down your house.

7. List some of the things you need protection from. Are there things your husband may have tried to protect you from in the past that you are resisting?

8. Name some things you do which give you an air of independence which could frustrate your husband in his role as protector of the family.

9. How can you re-establish your husband in his role as protector of the family?

10. List some of the questionable things you are doing which violate some area of the three-fold test about whether you are stepping into your husband's role.

 **On the Wisdom for Wives Website Content for Lesson 3 Day 3 you can find:**

“Your Husband Will Feel Respected When” taken from *Love & Respect*, by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs which lists applications for showing respect in your husband's created drives.

Day 4

In the last three days we have focused on understanding our husbands with respect to his God-given drives. Today we want to examine how men think and process differently than women, which leads to some common misperceptions and disappointments, resulting in unnecessary hurt and frustration.

Reading His Signals Accurately

Lysa TerKeurst (founder of Proverbs31.org) admits that she, like most women, has experiences where others bump into her happy and she comes emotionally unglued. We stuff, we explode, or react somewhere in between. But men have a tendency to deal with conflict or “issues” in a way that can be easily misperceived by their wives as conflict avoidance which can trigger a sense of insecurity or frustration in us.

Have you ever had this experience with your husband? An argument arises. You make your point. He makes his point. You counter with an even better argument (of course). He responds to your counter with a seemingly lame comeback (in your humble opinion). Then just as the layers of the conflict begin to peel back ... he walks out, or says something like: “Can we *please* talk about this later?” You follow him out of the room still trying to resolve the conflict, half irritated half worried because the relationship isn’t ‘right’. To the degree of passion in the conflict, this creates angst for us women because we aren’t sure if everything is going to be ‘okay.’

Or do you ever hear this from your husband when he comes home from work, “I just need a few minutes to decompress before you hit me with your day.”? And does the hair on the back of your neck stand up when you hear it? Understanding the truth about how men process and talk about thoughts and emotions will help alleviate unnecessary anxiety and frustration.

Understanding How Men Process Thoughts and Emotions

Shaunti explains in the excerpts below from *For Women Only* that some of these things we hear from our guy are likely signals of *one of four significant differences* in the way men seem to process and talk about thoughts and emotions – differences largely related to the wiring of the male brain. ¹³

Processing Difference #1: Men Often Have To Think Something Through Before They Can Talk It Through.

Women tend to be verbal processors – we usually think something through by talking it through. We have lots of connections between the left and right

hemispheres of the brain, allowing us to do fast, surface-level processing – and talk about – many thoughts and feelings at the same time.... Men tend to be internal processors. In most cases (although not all), it is actively difficult for a man to think something through by talking it through. He can *choose* to do so, but the more important or emotionally demanding the issue, the more difficult that becomes. A man's brain is wired to process one thing at a time, going deep within each one, rather than having all the inter-hemisphere connections that easily juggle many functions at once.

Jeff Feldhahn put it this way to Shaunti:

“Guys don't like to talk through things on the fly. That is not comfortable, because I don't really know where it is going. I like to have a road map of what I've thought through and thus know where the conversation is going. I think for a woman, part of the joy of communication is the discovery. But as a guy, I don't like to discover things in the communication, because I don't trust that it will cover all the nuances I need to think through. So not knowing where the conversation is going creates discomfort, whereas for you, it's part of the adventure.”

Processing Difference #2: Men Need Time to Do This.

“Not surprisingly, the solution for a man to thinking things through is time apart. Men can think and talk about baseball, politics, cooking dinner, chores, or rebuilding the deck with no time delay. But on issues of emotional importance, most men simply need time and space for internal processing. And that may mean a few hours or (for the really big issues) a few days.

In his book *What Could He Be Thinking?* Michael Gurian relays that brain scientists have discovered: “Men can take up to seven hours longer than women to process complex emotive data. Men more than women will not know what they feel at the moment of feeling and will take longer to figure it out. [And] men more than women may not be able to put their feelings into words in the moment and will tend to take longer to express feelings of words than women do.”¹⁴

Processing Difference #3: Men Think Through Everything.

It turns out men think everything through. But because they don't do it out loud, it is too easy for us to assume they weren't thinking at all. So when a man does something that confounds us, we think (or even say), “What was he thinking!” Well fess up, girls – the translation of that is “He wasn't thinking.” It's synonymous with “Well, that was a boneheaded move, and he did it because he clearly wasn't thinking.” But I discovered that men tend to think through *e-v-e-r-y-t-h-i-n-g*. Including our potential objections to whatever they just did!

As you can tell, this ultimately comes back to the respect issue. When confronted by an action that we find inexplicable, do we respect our men, or are we each subconsciously assuming, “*That was a boneheaded move because he wasn’t thinking?*”

Just because a man thinks something through deeply doesn't mean that his judgment is correct or that he has all the information or experience needed to make a smart decision. Although many issues are minor ones – on which husbands would love their wives to just trust them – many men emphasize that discussion and even disagreement about important issues is healthy and necessary. We just need to do it with the best assumption of our mates rather than the worst.

Processing Difference #4: After All That Thinking and Talking, Men Need to Think About Nothing.

Sometimes a man isn't stepping back in order to think something deeply through but because he needs time when he doesn't think about anything at all. Many of us have been hurt when, at the end of a long day, we really want to talk about something, and all her husbands want to do is collapse on the couch and surf all 375 channels. But it turns out that the same brain wiring that requires men to process something deeply before they talk about it also requires mental space to off-load the day's existing inputs before they can take in anymore. Here's how one man put it: “When I get home from work, if my wife tries to talk about the kids or her budget problems at work, it's like she's trying to pour more into an already full bucket. Whatever she's pouring just spills over and I'm not actually taking in what she's saying. But a few years ago we realized that if she can give me just 30 minutes, that is enough for me to let go of some of what is already in the bucket and create enough space for whenever she's wanting to talk about. Sometimes that 30 minutes is torture for her, but she's saying it really does work.”

In summary, Shaunti offers this personal wisdom regarding the male brain wiring on mental processing: “I have seen in my own life – and in researching thousands of couples – that we'll be so much happier when we work *with* the way our men are wired in this area rather than expecting them to have wiring that they simply do not have and getting upset that they don't.”¹⁵

Day 4 Homework

***Prayer Request:** Ask the Lord to show you if there are ways (emotionally, physically, mentally, or relationally) that you need your husband's protection, and to help you communicate to him that you are ready to let him do so.*

1. Of the four processing differences, which one creates the most frequent challenge for you? Which one is the most difficult challenge for you to accept? What new methods of interaction did you learn from these differences that you can apply?

NEXT STEPS – What's your takeaway?

2. As you reflect on this week's material on choosing to understand your husband: What would **repentance** look like in this area? What attitudes, actions or words do you need to acknowledge as sinful? Write out a prayer of repentance as you turn away from sin and rely on the Holy Spirit to humble and empower you.

3. Continue to reflect on how you view and understand your husband. Ask God to show you what is **true** about your husband, yourself, and God. What lies have you believed about your husband, yourself, or God? What truths have you maybe ignored?

4. In light of what is TRUE, what would it mean to **obey**? What one takeaway from this lesson is God impressing upon you to incorporate into your relationship with your husband? **Write this in the Next Steps Going Forward Chart in the Appendix.**

Let me mention one more 'cheap substitute' so common among Christian wives in our day. It is learning about what's right rather than doing what is right...It has been my observation that a large percentage of Christians know more – much more -- than they put into practice. And yet, they are continually interested in attending another class, taking another course, reading another book, going to another seminar...learning, discussing, studying, discovering...And what results? Normally, greater guilt. Or, on the other side, an enormous backlog of theoretical data that blinds and thickens the conscience rather than spurs it into action. Learning more truth is a poor and cheap substitute for stopping and putting into action the truth already learned.¹²

Charles R. Swindoll