

She Has A Right to Know

Question: Dear Sir: my husband often comes home very late at nights or during the early morning hours and refuses to say where he has been. He often wakes me up wanting to make love. He feels I am insulting him when I ask where he has been. Is that right? Should I know where he was? When I ask him why is he coming home so late, he yells out: "I am the man around here." "Who pays the bills?" "This is my house." "Who is taking care of you?" Should I put up with this kind of behavior? Should he come home those hours of the morning? Should I make love with him if he refuses to let me know where he was? Signed, Frustrated Wife.

Answer: Dear Frustrated Wife: You do have a right to know where your husband goes and why he comes home at such odd hours. It sounds as though you do not have a marriage. You and your husband are just cohabiting mates. You are the maid and he is the master. You do have a right to know where he is all the time. In reality, if he respects and loves you, he will not go out to places without your knowledge and come home long after you have fallen asleep. He will voluntarily inform you where he was. He would not choose to go places that he knows would devalue you as his wife. Any husband who feels he can do whatever he wants in marriage and does not feel accountable to his wife is acting foolishly. Any wife who does the same is acting foolishly.

MALE CHAUVINISTS

This kind of behavior is usually comes from male chauvinists who have many false concepts about marriage. Here are a few of them: 1) The wife belongs to the husband, not the husband to the wife. 2) God gave the husband power over his wife. 3) The husband has veto power over any decision his wife makes. 4) Men are more intelligent than women. 5) Husbands should make more money than their wives. 6) Wives should obey their husbands. 7) A woman's place is in the home. She must never leave it unless the husband allows her to do so. 8) A wife must please her husband sexually at all times, even when she is not in the mood. 9) God created wives to be their husbands' helpers and not the other way around. These false and erroneous beliefs about marriage and the role of husbands and wives have and are still destroying relationships today. Hundreds of years ago, women in most countries had virtually no social or family status. They had to rely on their husbands to raise money for the family. They had less ability, education, rights, freedom, and respect from their husbands and society.

WHERE DID IT ALL COME FROM?

Too many men in our society have been taught very well by their forefathers and foremothers that women are nothing more than sexual property, maids, and child bearers and rearers. This belief goes back to the early centuries. Dr. John Bristow, in his book "What the Bible Really Says About Love, Marriage and Family," states that in the "Hebrew society and other neighboring cultures, girls were regarded as the property of their fathers and wives as property of their husbands. This is reflected in the law found in Numbers 30:3-5:

"When a young woman still living in her father's house makes a vow to the LORD or obligates herself by a pledge and her father hears about her vow or pledge but says nothing to her, then all her vows and every pledge by which she obligated herself will stand. But if her father forbids her when he hears about it, none of her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand; the LORD will release her because her father has forbidden her."

Rape: Dr. Bristow points out that "The law then states that a woman's husband shall have the same right of veto for any vow his wife might make." In the ancient Hebrew world, Bristow expounds that "The

Mosaic laws regarding both seduction and rape bring the concept of women as sexual property into especially clear focus." According to Exodus 22:16-17, a man who seduces (rapes) a maiden, the law stated, must pay the father of the victim the amount normally given as a bride price for a virgin, and marrying her or not depended entirely on the father's decision. In Deuteronomy 22:28-29 we have another shocking revelation of the value of women in those days. "A man who rapes a maiden, however, (but only if the commission of his crime is witnessed), will pay the victim's father fifty shekels or silver and then marry her, and never be allowed to divorce her." The shock is that the woman herself is not given a choice over whether or not to marry her attacker (the rapist). It is the father's decision. Her emotional well-being is not taken in consideration. Why? Because she is only property, no more valuable than the goats, the slave living outside, and the vegetable garden.

Incest: In today's culture, incest is generally based on genetic proximity. "In the Old Testament, however," Dr. Bristow points out that "incest was defined according to the principle of sexual property." Thus we have numerous marriages that in our own society would be forbidden. Here are a few examples: Nahor married his niece Milcah (Gen 11:29), Abraham married his sister Sarah (Gen 20:12), Isaac married his cousin Rebekah Gen 24:15, Jacob married two of his cousins, Rachel and Leah (Gen 29:12). Esau married his cousin Malhalath (Gen 28:9), Amram, Moses' father married his aunt (Num 26:59). Tamar was sexually accosted by her brother Amnon. She tried to talk him into marrying her instead of raping her. (2 Sam 13:13).

Eventually Moses' laws forbade such behavior. Leviticus 18:6-18: brings that out:

"You must never have sexual intercourse with a close relative, for I am the LORD. Do not violate your father by having sexual intercourse with your mother. She is your mother; you must never have intercourse with her. Do not have sexual intercourse with any of your father's wives, for this would violate your father. Do not have sexual intercourse with your sister or half sister, whether she is your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether she was brought up in the same family or somewhere else. Do not have sexual intercourse with your granddaughter, whether she is your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter; that would violate you. Do not have sexual intercourse with the daughter of any of your father's wives; she is your half sister.

Note very carefully that although these laws protect women, yet these very laws were based on the concept of women as sexual property. To uncover a woman's nakedness is regarded in the law as uncovering her husband's nakedness. In other words, a wife's own body belongs to her husband, so that to misuse it is to trespass against his property. No wonder we are having so many problems today!

Learning from the ancient Hebrews, the ancient Greek philosophers laid the foundation for the modern devaluing of women. In the Ancient Greek world, women could not sue or be sued. They did not appear in public with their husbands. A man's list of assets included his wife. The Greek philosopher, Plato taught "Being born a woman is a divine punishment, since a woman is halfway between a man and an animal." Aristotle taught "a female is a deformed male." These teachings and many more, impacted the making of modern laws and practices around the world.

WOMEN CREATED WITH A VOICE

The Apostle Paul made it his mission to nullify the teachings of the Greek philosophers which were so prevalent in his day. He clearly states in Galatians 3:38 that "Male and female are one in Christ." He strengthened the concept of equality and that women had equal voice, vote, and power when he said in 1 Corinthians 11:4 women as well as men are to lead in worship. He disqualified the idea that

women did not have intelligence equal to men when he stated in 1 Timothy 2:11 that women are to learn. Contrary to teachings in his day, Paul also taught in 1 Corinthians 11:11 about the inter-dependent relationship of a husband and wife when he states :“Nevertheless, in the Lord, woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman.” He shocked the men of his day when he elevated women from the pits of being sexual property with these words: “The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.” 1 Corinthians 7:4.

LOVE YOUR WIVES

Now we can clearly understand when the Apostle Paul emphasized in Ephesians 5:21-26, “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves the Church.” He needed men to elevate women who were by law valueless to the priceless state in which God created them. They were not to be influenced by the negative, degrading philosophies of the day. We must do the same today.

TELL HIM

Married men who feel they can do whatever they want to do are making a big mistake. I encourage women not to tolerate such behavior. They should gently and firmly inform their power hungry husbands that although they truly love them, they will no longer be disrespected and devalued. Do not scream and shout at your husbands. Do not threaten them or use demeaning words. You will be lowering yourselves to their behavior.

Dear Frustrated Wife, if you are certain your husband is having sex with other women, you have a right to protect yourself from diseases by not having sex with him. Stand firm in a loving way. Be consistent. Many men continue to do what they do because too many wives enable their behavior by not saying a word or by not being consistent with their concerns. Therefore, the husbands think the wives are only bluffing. Insist that both of you seek counseling. Remember that you are not property.

Women, you are children of God created to be equal with men. God gave you were equal authority . Genesis 1:26 confirms this equality in power and authority. The New Living Translation presents it this way: “Then God said, "Let us make people (male and female) in our image, to be like ourselves. They (man and woman) will be masters over all life--the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the livestock, wild animals, and small animals. . . .” Adam and Eve together were given “dominion” or to be masters over everything, but not over each other. They were to walk side by side in companionship. One author puts it this way: “The woman came out of a man's rib, not from his feet to be walked on, not from his head to be superior; but from the side to be equal, and next to the heart to be loved.”

It was sin that changed the picture. It was sin that corrupted the husband-wife relationship. The good news is that God gave his life on Calvary to remove the curse of sin and to bring humans on one level at the foot of the cross.

Wives, God did not make you to be sexual property. He made both women and men complete, unique, special, and with a purpose. You were created in His image. Believe it. Act it. **Barrington H. Brennen is a marriage and family therapist, a nationally certified psychologist, an ordained minister of the gospel. Send your question and comments to P.O. Box N-896, Nassau, The Bahamas, or email question@soencouragement.org Or call 242-323 8772, or visit the web site www.soencouragement.org**