

FOUR ACES

How do we respond to husbands who are not believers, neutral spiritually, or not on the same page as we are spiritually? It is easy to be discouraged, especially if you are surrounded with wives with husbands who desire to be godly leaders for their families and you hear great reports, examples. The ugly head of comparison rears and Satan has you on the ropes.

What perspective can we have in those situations? Where is our hope? How can we be godly wives to ungodly men?

Pretend you have a deck of cards and spread them all out helter skelter and that they represent your life with your husband-- each card being a circumstance or an emotion, or event, memory, hope, desire, etc. Now pull out the four aces and hold them in your hand. If you are playing cards, these four aces would trump everything else in the deck. Let's consider four aces that you as a wife have in your hand that will help you have a Biblical perspective and hope and peace and patience in your marriage and trump the circumstances in which you find yourself.

Ace of Spades: Prayer

I like to say that every wife needs to have an affair—a prayer affair with God for her husband. No one on earth can pray for him as you can. No one knows him better than you--not his mother, his sister, his co-workers. You know his heart, his mind, his soul. Pray, cry out to God for his salvation, for the Spirit to woo him, to hound him (notice I said, pray that the Spirit hound him, not you!). Pray against the evil one blinding him, taking ground in his life.

If he knows the Lord, but is not walking with Him, or is not fully devoted to Him, pray for his spiritual growth.

I encourage you to pray Scripture for him. I realized several years into my marriage to an unbeliever that I felt that there were no answers to my prayers for Him. I concluded that I must be praying for the wrong things. So I searched Scripture for what was God's desire to Him. Jot down quickly, 10 things you would like to change about your husband. Set them aside and ask the Lord to show you 10 things he would like to have in your husband and to reveal them to you in Scripture. When I did this, I realized my list was not God's and vice versa.

Be purposeful about praying for him. Set aside a block of time weekly if you can to purposefully pray Scripture for Him and journal your requests. I suggest starting with the qualities listed in Titus 1:6-9 and 1 Tim 3:2-6. I would take one of these a month and study the quality—looking for other scriptures that use the word or phrase, looking for Biblical characters who had the quality and the result, who didn't have the quality and the consequence, looking at how it was perfected in Jesus. I would meditate on what needed to be changed in me to cooperate with God in developing that quality in my husband, how was I helping him or hindering him in having that quality. It put my heart much more in tune with God and His plan for my husband and for me. I studied Job 29 praying

and personalizing the verses there that describe Job as a man who feared God and hated evil. I pray other passages for him—Ephesians 6; Ephesians 3:16-19; the Beatitudes, Romans 6; the 10 commandments, chapters of Proverbs, on and on—the Spirit will direct your prayers to other Scriptures.

Something else that I pray that really helps me in marriage is to pray through a passage with both of our names inserted, ie, Psalm 23. “The Lord is “our” shepherd. “We” shall not want. He makes the “two” of us to lie down in green pastures. He leads “both of us” beside still waters, etc.” This just reminds me of our oneness and how God wants me to see myself as one with him and by faith I am asking God to bring that kind of oneness about. Even when my husband was not a believer I would pray for verses and ask God to make that true about both of us. What a joy to look back and see how God has really done that in many ways.

I encourage you to journal your prayers for him and date them. It has been very encouraging to look back and see how God directed my prayers, see how He has answered and how I have grown in what and how I asked for him in prayer.

My biggest insight from praying purposefully and lifetime for him has been the realization that the best prayer for me to pray is “Lord, change me.” I began the saga thinking he was the one who needed to do all the changing and “catch up” with me. With joy, I can say he is way ahead of me and I am humbled to see how much I needed changing.

Ace of Hearts – Trust in God who is SOVEREIGN

No matter where your husband is spiritually, your trust in God can grow and increase and deepen.

This ace means filtering all the other “cards” in life through the grid that God is Sovereign. Your husband is not. God is in charge. All that occurs is under His watchful care and eye and omnipotence. Purpose to learn more about God, His character. I like to explain it this way. Suppose everything you know about God and could articulate fit into a small brown paper bag. If you are content to leave your knowledge, understanding, grasp of God at that, you will not be using this ace. Use Scripture to enlarge, broaden, stretch, change that brown bag size. Take any of the Psalms—let them open your heart to more of God’s qualities, ways, deeds, plans. Keep a section of your journal to record these gems you discover in a list. Read over your list frequently so your confidence is in this One who is all these things. Never think we max out on knowing God. I came to know Him more than 53 years ago. I am still on the front edge of the learning curve to know Him. No one will ever exhaust the fountain of knowledge of God; there is no “been there, done that” about knowing God. He is infinite.

God is the Holy Spirit in your husband’s life and you are not. It is an important point. We as wives sometimes think our wedding vows included and “be his Holy Spirit.” Let God be God and you be wife. Do not try to convict him, pressure him,

nag him. Let God who created quite a lovely world be the creator of life and molder of it in him. You know the feeling you have on a hot day when you step on chewed gum and your foot is struck and the more you try to get out of it, the stickier it becomes. That is my picture of what happens when we take responsibility for our husband's spiritual growth and maturity. It is my prayer that after you consider these four aces you would be able to entrust your husband to God's care and free him to be able to have God get his attention and not be sticky gum of hounding, nagging, pushing, pulling him to pursue God which really distracts him from being able to focus on God's Spirit's wooing of him. Only God can change a heart. Only God can form Christlikeness in the human heart.

Phil 3:6 says that God begins the good work in us and He promises to carry it on until the day of Christ Jesus. That verse says we can have confidence in is not in our mate but in God. Rest in His doing the work; wait on Him to do it.

Ace of Diamonds: Wisdom

Regardless of how your husband behaves or is spiritually, you can be a woman of wisdom. You can pursue wisdom. Be a pursuer of wisdom. My definition of wisdom is that it is a pair of glasses we can put on to correct our thinking, our view from temporal, feeling oriented, hormonally affected into Biblical thinking and from God's perspective thinking. It corrects our vision and thinking.

Read 1 Peter 2:21-25 to get the context for 1 Peter 3:1-6. This passage describes a woman of wisdom who lives with a man who is sinful and ladies, that description describes them all but God can help us have a meek and quiet spirit that trusts God despite what the circumstances are and God says a husband may be won without a word.

Wisdom, I think, enables you to not see the solution, and the end, but to do the next right thing. Many times, I have prayed, Lord, help me do the next thing—not be paralyzed by feelings and thoughts, but do the next right thing..

Wisdom helps us respond not react. Soak yourself in Proverbs. Easy plan is to read the chapter corresponding to the day of the month until you find one verse that speaks to you for the day at hand.

Wisdom is understanding that the greatest need a man has is for respect—not sex which is what his answer would be. God tells us that in Ephesians 5. Girls, you are very powerful. You can destroy a man with words and cut him into ribbons with words. You are very powerful. Ask God to help you respect him and to communicate that to him in ways and words that he receives.

Wisdom is seeing that life is a fraction. A numerator of today and things we grasp today over the denominator of eternity. Ask God to help you see everyday as that

fraction and everyday to be looking to plant seeds of the eternal in all that you think, say, and do. Every prayer affects eternity.

Wisdom is learning to make wise appeals to those who are in leadership over us. Study Esther, Daniel, others who made appeals and how they did it. Ask God to help you appeal things you disagree with. Wisdom is not isolating, not being silent, rather it is speaking in a wise way that grants the hearer the freedom to consider the issue without being backed against the wall or disrespected.

Wisdom is also asking God to bring about a Jonathan/David relationship in your husband's life. A guy or group of guys who are like iron sharpening iron in his life.

Ace of Clubs – Character

God is using the exact circumstances you find yourself in with this husband to form your character. When you came to the Lord He began this good work and He will be about it until the day you are with Him and are like Him. The character God is busy forming in you is Christlikeness. Nothing your husband can do can keep God from transforming your character. You can hinder that by not cooperating with God in His work in you.

No suffering is ever wasted when we are asking God to let it benefit us and mold us and change us. Patience is not giving God a deadline but trusting Him to be about doing good in your heart and life and removing and changing the circumstances in such a way that brings glory and honour to Him and the best good and benefit for you.

What does Christlike character look like in a wife? Passages I love to read and apply to “wifing” are Proverbs 31 – do I have the character of this wife? 1st Corinthians 13 – does my love and the action of it toward him have this character? End of the day ask yourself, was I patient toward him today, kind toward him, not keeping a record of his wrongs for the day, etc. I mentally at the end of a day think of one of those childhood scribble boards where when you raise the top sheet it all erases. I think about all my irritations, discouragements with “wifing” at the end of a day and I ask God to help my wipe the slate clean and trust them all to Him.

Read the writings of and biographies of godly wives. Ask God to help you see the character He has developed in them. Amy Carmichael's biography has had a great deal of influence on me as well as her poems. I see a character in her that only God could have molded and I long to be molded likewise. Elisabeth Elliott's writings have had a great influence on me. Edith Schaeffer's writings encouraged me to see God's hand in all the mundane things of “wifing” and that has brought me great joy as I ask God to help do the same. A good book currently that I think helps see what Christlikeness in wives looks like is Captivating by Stasi Eldredge. While each of these women have unique personalities and human weaknesses, they are examples to us of what yielding to God

and seeking to be fully devoted followers of Christ can look like in all kinds of difficult circumstances.

God is interested in character. That is what He is about in us. That is what He desires to do in your husband also. We need to be asking God to do that and cooperating with God as He does it. Focusing on character is a great help with the tendency we have as wives to be annoyed and irritated by our mates. When habits, mannerisms, expressions, etc. about our mates annoy us, concentrate instead of character. What character in him do you admire? What character qualities is God at work in? What character qualities are under construction in Him? 51 years later, he still has some of the annoying habits—but if I focus on the character God has been at work creating, it melts my annoyance at toothpicks left in pockets in the wash, etc.

Life is not a perfectly painted picture of a cottage and perfectly painted white picket fence. It is a journey with your hand in the Hand of Your Loving Father who is powerful and kind and merciful and totally committed to your good as you follow Him—talking to Him in prayer, discovering more and more about Him, seeking wisdom, and desiring His character formed in you and your mate. He will use this gift of this husband to answer those prayers, allow increasing knowledge and understanding about Him, reveal true wisdom from above, and change you, revealing the wonder and potential He designed in you. There is not a guarantee that you will use all four aces and your marriage is going to turn out great, your hopes and dreams may all be ashes, but there is this guarantee—the one who has called you to Himself has promised “I will never leave you.” Heb. 13:5. He keep His word. He will never desert you, never leave you, always have your hand. You will not be shortchanged by investing in these four aces, but the result is in God’s hand. Because of that, we can avoid manipulation, comparison, fear, self-pity.

Prayer, Trust, Wisdom, Character

Which of these four aces have you overlooked in the deck of your life?

What will you do to begin to include it?

Write out a prayer to God asking Him to help you do that.

What is a specific way that pursuing that ace will affect your relationship to your husband on a day to day basis?

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July, 2005