



The truth about sexual lust; Part 17.

The wives, Part 2



Patriarchy

The societal pendulum swings far out, then far back. Women look at the way things were in the Old Testament days, and they can't wrap their heads around it. At worst, they despise it. It was, and is, called "patriarchy." It was the days when men were the heads of their homes—loving, caring for, and protecting women and children. The glory was not restricted to Old Testament times; Paul re-iterates the truth of male headship in Ephesians, chapter 5.

It is the ideal way of things.

The prejudice against patriarchy is the assumption that the men of old were cruel, hard despots. The majority of the husbands, however, loved their wives. Most women today don't even know what a loving husband is. For these wives, whenever their distrusted mates gaze at other women, the wives form strong associations between bad husbands and roving eyes. To these wives: bad husband = roving eyes. Because of their limited experience, the wives assume that the two go hand-in-hand.

They don't.

Many good husbands in the Bible looked at other women. In fact, many good husbands in the Bible not only looked at other women, but made love to a different woman every morning. Why? Because all the women they made love to were their wives. David was one of these husbands.

David, King of Israel, had many wives. So did Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Solomon, and Rehoboam. Were these men sexual freaks? Perverts? Self-obsessed woman haters? Just the opposite; they were godly men. How can I say that? Because God Himself instituted polygamy. The law itself (the law that God

wrote) actually *required* a man—in a special case—to become a polygamist. In the case of the death of his married brother, a man was required—irrespective of whether he was married or not—to take his brother’s widow as his wife. Why did God do this? Simple. He was concerned that women have heads over them, and that children have fathers.

Polygamy is not, primarily, about sex. It is about providing for women and children. Additionally, yes, it does answer to the stronger male sex drive. (God, by the way, is not an emotional, politically-correct American with Puritanical sexual mores.)

Again, God instituted polygamy for the sake of women and children. As women have historically outnumbered men, polygamy opened the field of available husbands. A woman without a head or a father for her children had more choices; she could choose a good man with a track record of loving and providing for his family.

Consider King David. This man had several wives. What *modern* wife, reading the wonderful psalms of David, ever pauses to consider that this man woke up with a different wife each morning? She never even thinks about it. The modern, American wife may just as well attempt to grasp little green men from Mars. So what does she do? She pretends it never happened. She’ll say things like, “God *tolerated* polygamy,” when in fact God never tolerated it at all—He instituted it.

“I’m sorry to be the one
who breaks this to you, but
we can easily make love to
several women and not love
you any less.”

Let’s say David wakes up with Eglah on Monday morning. He tells her he loves and cherishes her. It is a truth. It’s so true that he makes beautiful love to his beautiful Eglah. Eglah *feels* loved. Ask her. Eglah: “*I have never known a better husband.*” She knows beyond a shadow of a doubt that David loves her; he demonstrates it time and again.

On Tuesday morning, David wakes up with Abigail. He tells her he loves and cherishes her. It is a truth. It’s so true that he makes beautiful love to his beautiful wife Abigail. Abigail *feels* loved. Ask her. Abigail: “*I have never known a better husband.*” She knows beyond a shadow of a doubt that



David loves her; he demonstrates it time and again.

We men have something to tell you women that you are not going to like, but that you need to hear. Are you ready? Here it goes: We can easily make love to several women, and not love you any less. I’m sorry to have to be the one to break this to you, but I doubt your husband will tell you. So there it is. We have been wired this way by God. *By God.*

In Ephesians, chapter 5, Paul writes that husbands are to love wives, “as Christ loves the ecclesia.” The ecclesia is a many-member organism. Thus, it is natural for a man to have several wives. The man typifies Christ, Who has many members; He is the head of the body. This is why God gives the gander different laws than the goose. He made women to love and care for one man because the ecclesia has one head—Christ. You may scream, “Unfair!” but I am only telling you the facts according to Scripture. You will have to take up “unfair” with God.

Since David told Abigail he loved her and cherished her, was he lying to Eglah? Our modern wife would assume so. Our modern wife cannot even entertain the concept of her husband loving someone else. She assumes

he must be lying to one woman in order to be able to tell another woman that he loves her. (Does the husband, who is also a father, lie to one child by telling another he loves him/her? Of course not. But it's the same principle.)

Polygamy is still common practice in many modern cultures. It was a system instituted by God Himself, and no New Testament passage abrogates it. That supervisors and servants in the local ecclesias of Paul's day (1 Timothy, chapter 3) were instructed to be the "husbands of one wife," proves it was common for men of those days—even men without an office in the ecclesias—to have multiple wives. Our culture is prejudiced against it because of highly publicized cases of its abuse.

Each of my arguments assume a good, loving husband.

I am not promoting polygamy. I am not a practitioner. I am only making a point. The point is that the societal pendulum swings. Because women *have* been abused over the years (I am not including the wives of polygamy), we of "enlightened" times naturally overcompensate. Now we must avoid even the appearance of offending women. We treat them now with such kid gloves that Christian leaders exhort men to become as females. "Be more like your wife" is the new cry of Christian "maledom." We are supposed to think like women, act like women, talk like women. "Don't even *look* at other women!" these legalists tell us. (Since



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they love the law of Moses so much, why aren't they, themselves, promoting polygamy? Because they're hypocrites, that's why.) "Bounce your eyes!" they command us from their sex-crazed parapets.

Speaking of crazy, the pendulum has swung so madly and badly in the other direction (away from God's design) that men who *are* men have become the enemy. That we're men *at all* is now a problem to be overcome with books from WaterBrook Press. It used to be—in the good old days—that we could take several wives and love each one of them. God not only allowed it, He instituted and in some cases demanded it. These days, we're not even allowed to *look* at other women. These days, we're supposed to control even our dream life. We can't even masturbate. We're now so restricted in our sexuality, we must pray that our semen dries up from our sacs. We can't even *voice* God-given desires, let alone practice them, without being called perverts, animals, and heathen.

Unless we start bouncing our eyes, we are overtly and covertly threatened with divorce.

Is it any wonder that men turn to pornography in droves? Will anyone dare tell me that the present position of the societal pendulum is helping matters rather than hurting them? I'm afraid I would have to shove the modern divorce rates into your face.

No. The pendulum is so far out of whack that we've forgotten where it's supposed to be. We've forgotten what it is to be male. Where there should be some lenience and understanding toward husbands—seeing as they are wired by God to love many women and take many wives—we have gone completely the other way, the wrong way, and shackled men with even more fetters than those already imposed by a sexually hung-up, politically-correct, over-feminized culture.

Every Man's Battle is the perfect example of everything wrong with us. The especial sin of *Every Man's Battle* is putting *God's* name to the mess. He has nothing to do with it. He knows how stupid bouncing the eyes is. And yet *Every Man's Battle* is part of the culture rot that must occur in the end times. (How ironic is that? The culture rot is not sex. The culture rot is a whacked-out, religious attitude *concerning* sex.) God knows how religious, and thus how imbalanced we are. But never mind that. We don't really care what God thinks; we spend very little time looking into it. We prefer our culture and religious institutions, habits, and practices, to a careful study and a mature understanding of God and His Word.

After all, what does *He* know? He's not a modern-day American. He only *invented* sex.

We, on the other hand, have taken the ball and run with it.

The saga of Matt and Julie

I once knew a woman who believed these very things. She presumed to love God, but preferred modern Western culture and social acceptance above all else. (Due to her upbringing, it was impossible for her to think otherwise, I realize that.) Her name was (and probably still is) Julie. She had read in a past reprint how I had advised my friend to fight depression with feminine beauty and to look at photos of women in bikinis. She was appalled.

Did I mention that Julie is extremely religious? (I see that I've alluded to it.)

One day, I was sitting with Julie and her husband Matt in a restaurant booth. Julie regurgitated the standard Christian lines that for a married man to even look at another woman was sin, and that it led inevitably to "going all the way," if only in the mind. (I had to admit that this was a step up from Arterburn and Stoeker, who contend that, since girl-watching is visual foreplay, such a thing inevitably leads to *actually* going all the way.)

Since this woman, Julie, despised me already and had already condemned me to my own compartment of hell (the "Martin Zender" compartment), I decided to prove my point. What did I have to lose? Not a damn thing. Besides, it would eventually give me something to write about, which I am taking advantage of today.

I said, "Julie, you don't realize how easy it is for men to admire feminine beauty, and then move on and still love their wives and think their wives are the sexiest women ever. Watch. I will prove it.

"Look, here comes a woman with a really shapely backside. Most people would call this, 'her ass,' but since you have high-strung and unreasonable religious sensibilities—even scruples—I shall call it 'her backside.' It's really her ass, but that's okay. We'll make it her backside for your sake. See? See how careful I am not to offend you?"

My so-called friend, Julie, naturally rolled her eyes, then hid them behind her hands. I continued my demonstration.

"I am now staring at this woman's backside," I said. "I am *not* bouncing my eyes, Julie. In fact, I am letting

the wonderful fact that I'm a male with lots of testosterone flowing through my veins and arteries, dictate my actions. My eyes are actually *settling* upon this woman's backside. I am telling you, this woman has a wonderful, feminine form. It is amazing to me, really, how it moves when she walks. God did an amazing job on this woman. Just think how much of this glory I would miss if I'd bounced my eyes."

Julie had plugged her ears by this time. (Her husband was smiling, but she would not have known this—thank God—because Julie's eyes were still just as closed as her ears, her mind, her heart, and her spirit.). At last, Julie unhandedly her ears and opened her eyes. (Her mind and spirit remained shut.) By this time, I was looking at her again.

"Okay, Julie. As you can tell, I have now taken my eyes from the woman's backside. Am I chasing after the woman? No. Did I disrespect her as a person? You tell me. Have you ever noticed that a man has, "wonderful eyes?" You are staring at his cornea's and pupils, Julie. You are staring at his organs; the eyes are *organs*. Are you disrespecting the *man* by admiring his organs of sight?"

Julie stared at me blankly.

"All right, then," I said.

"Please, Martin," she said. "Please stop."

"Look at me, Julie. Do you see me? *Why* do you see me? You see me because I am still at this table. You see me because I am not running after that woman to steal her from her husband, assuming that she has one. Now let's see if I still love my wife and think she is the most beautiful woman in the world."

I closed my eyes for a moment, tilting my head toward the ceiling, deep in thought. Matt and Julie, by some miracle, indulged this demonstration. Ten seconds passed; I emerged from my self-imposed reverie to once again look these pseudo-friends in the eyes.

"Wow," I said. "This is amazing. Are you ready for this? You will never guess what happened. Ready? Here it goes: *I still love*



my wife. I still think that she is the most beautiful woman in the world. Imagine that. Is this a miracle? No. It is common, average, everyday stuff. I have just proven—before your very eyes—that a man can admire feminine beauty that is not the beauty of his wife, and can still—at the same time—love his wife, and *not* rape the other woman. And guess what. *Most men are exactly like me.*”

Telling quotes from women

Here are some telling quotes from women, as quoted in *Every Man's Battle*. This section of the book, titled, “The Heart of a Woman,” begins like this—

Male sexual impurity can be unsettling, even shocking, to women, which is why we're including sections from interviews we conducted with women regarding *Every Man's Battle*.

(In my copy of *Every Man's Battle*, I crossed out the word “impurity” from the above sentence, writing “reality” above it. Women are shocked by male sexual impurity, yes, but most are unfortunately equally aghast at the insistent *reality* of the male sex drive, imagining reality to *be* impurity.)

Deena, when asked for her reaction to this book's premise, replied, “This stuff is crazy. Women don't have that problem!” (pg. 33).

Dear Deena: Because you lack sacs and semen, it's impossible for you to understand those who do. The sexes are different for a reason. Are you still in high-school? I am just wondering. The way that you said, “This stuff is crazy” came across to me as somewhat of a squeal. So I am going to assume that you are still in high school. There is nothing wrong with that; I was in high school once myself; a lot of us were. But honestly, Deena. Men and women are different. I'm glad you have noticed this, at least. But why call the male sex drive, “this stuff”? That hurts my feelings. “Crazy” equals “insane.” Again, I'm offended. Does the lack of a sex drive as strong as a man's somehow make you saner than the boys at your school?

Deena, see if you can sign up for a class at your school that will take you through a Scriptural investigation into what God has to say about sex. Are you willing to do that? Are you willing to read my writings on this topic? I encourage you to lend an uncondemning ear to the boys at your school. Should you find yourself married some day, listen patiently to your husband. Allow him to unburden his sexual soul to you without getting your bobby socks in a twist. That's all I ask. Stop thinking that he's crazy.

Fawn decided men and women are so different in their sexual wiring that it defies understanding. “I was surprised to learn,” she said, “that Christian men have this problem even after they're married. I found the intensity of the problem to be shocking” (pg. 33).

Dear Fawn: The male sex drive is not a problem. The problem is that your religious training has made



it into a problem. Your religious training (I am contrasting this with Scriptural revelation) has made you consider disparate sexual desires something to solve and overcome. This is so unnecessary. God made men and women the way they are. How does this defy understanding? It's easy to understand. I just said it: *God made men differently than He made women*. It's not that you don't understand it; it's painfully simple. The fact is: you don't *like* it. You want your husband to be more like you. In fact, why isn't *everyone* like you? I think you are mad at God for making your husband so different. Sexual maturity will come, Fawn, when you simply

accept what is. Stop fighting. Work with the program; it's God's program. Again, the male sex drive and feminine beauty-power is a problem only to those making it one.

Cathy said, "I did not know the depth that men would go and the risk they would take to satisfy their desires. I was unaware of how intense these temptations are and how much defense a man must muster to avoid stepping over God's boundaries" (pg. 33).

Dear Cathy, The only reason men go deep and take risks is that their wives generally not only fail to understand them, but have no desire to understand them. After all, why try to understand a pervert? Not only do these wives fail to understand, they condemn their husbands—at least subconsciously—for being men. Thus, we men are driven underground, where matters become predictably worse.

Since Fred and Stephen interviewed you for this book, I assume that you're under the influence of the Fred Stoeker and Stephen Arterburn Definitions of What Constitutes God's Sexual Boundaries. The problem, Cathy, is that Fred and Stephen's definitions are not God's definitions. Their boundaries are not God's boundaries. Far, far from it. Please read Chapter 2 of my book, *The Lie of Every Man's Battle*, or read Issues 15 and 16 of Volume 6 of my newsletter ZWTF (http://martinzender.com/zwtf_archives.htm) to find out what God has to say about which human activities constitute sexual sin, and which do not.

I appreciate how you are finally becoming aware of testosterone. Better late than never. Please tell your friends about it.

Andrea said that, from talking with her father and the different guys she dated, she knows men are easily attracted visually. But she never realized the major extent of this problem until she met her future husband. "At the time, he was my closest friend in the youth group, but we were not romantically inclined," Andrea said. "He did feel safe enough with me to share his problem with pornography. It was quite a battle for him, as he had first been exposed to it in third grade. I was a little amazed by it all because, although I was attracted to guys by their looks during my dating years, the physical attraction I felt was nothing compared to what a man feels when looking at a woman" (pgs. 33-34).

Dear Andrea: I am seeing a common theme here with those of your gender, and it is this: You consider the fact that men are easily attracted visually to women, a

problem. The is the theme of *Every Man's Battle* in general; *the male sex drive is wrong; the male sex drive is a problem needing solved*. From this faulty premise can only come faulty conclusions, wacky solutions, and unwarranted resolutions.

Andrea, the fact that pictures of erotic behavior designed to produce sexual excitement ("pornography") produced sexual excitement in your future husband, is normal. It would be abnormal if they didn't. I think it is interesting (terrible, really) how homosexuality is condemned by Christians, while at the same time the opposite of homosexuality—a healthy sex drive—is also condemned. For males, it's a lose-lose situation. I suspect the reason sexual photos and writing became a problem for your husband is that someone somewhere along the line made it one. I suspect a religious upbringing, complete with the standard-issue condemnation of all things sexual. Am I close?



Thank you for being honest enough to admit your attraction to guys' looks. You are lucky that Fred and Stephen have not condemned your eyes. Our eyes got condemned by Fred and Stephen; we have to bounce our eyes. You have no idea how hard this is. Our eyes don't like it at all; it short-circuits their entire purpose. *We* don't like it, either; life is hard enough, and now we have to resist beauty. You're lucky that Fred and Stephen have not asked *you* to bounce *your* eyes away from beauty. You can look at things like decorative

pillows and flowers all day. You can even *stare* at the pillows and flowers, if you want. You can even bring them home and play with them. I guess you get a pass because your attraction to the physical attributes of the opposite sex “was nothing compared to what a man feels.”

See? The problem is that we’re men. You should thank God every day, Andrea, that you’re not a man.

Andrea, you are so lucky that you don’t have semen and sacs. I wrote about these two curses (semen and sacs) extensively in an earlier edition of this newsletter. (“Nature Itself Teaches You”). It’s bad enough, Andrea, to have semen. I know you can’t imagine what that’s like. (Neither could Deena, above, who said, “This stuff is crazy.”) Semen is bad enough, believe me. But then, to make matters worse, God gave us sacs for the semen to pool in. *Can you believe that?* This dooms us to looking at people like you (God also cursed us with eyes) and saying, “Oh, wow! Isn’t *she* attractive.”

Why did God saddle us with such a terrible problem? Why doesn’t God solve it?

I am being facetious, of course. None of this is a problem. It’s only a problem to those who read, *Every Man’s Battle*. I have a Scripture verse for this phenomenon of stuff being a problem only to people who think it’s a problem. It’s Titus 1:15—

All, indeed, is clean to the clean, yet to the defiled and unbelieving nothing is clean, but their mind as well as conscience is defiled.”

Anyway, thank you that you seem to be waking up to the fact that men have sacs and semen. I, for one, appreciate that. Please tell your friends about what you have learned here.

Ellen said, “After hearing about this, I was surprised that married men would have so much trouble. I feel very sorry for them. When I asked my own husband about it, he was honest with me that he had some struggles, and at first I was hurt. Then I just felt thankful that he would share with me. He hasn’t had a major problem in this area, for which I’m thankful.”

Dear Ellen, I detect a kind, understanding spirit in you. Thank you. I am betting your husband has more struggles than he’s letting on. All he did was share some of them with you, and you became hurt. See? You made it about *you*. (You recovered quickly from this, but let’s pursue it.) This is universal among wives; you become *personally* affronted by a man’s *general* attraction to the opposite sex.

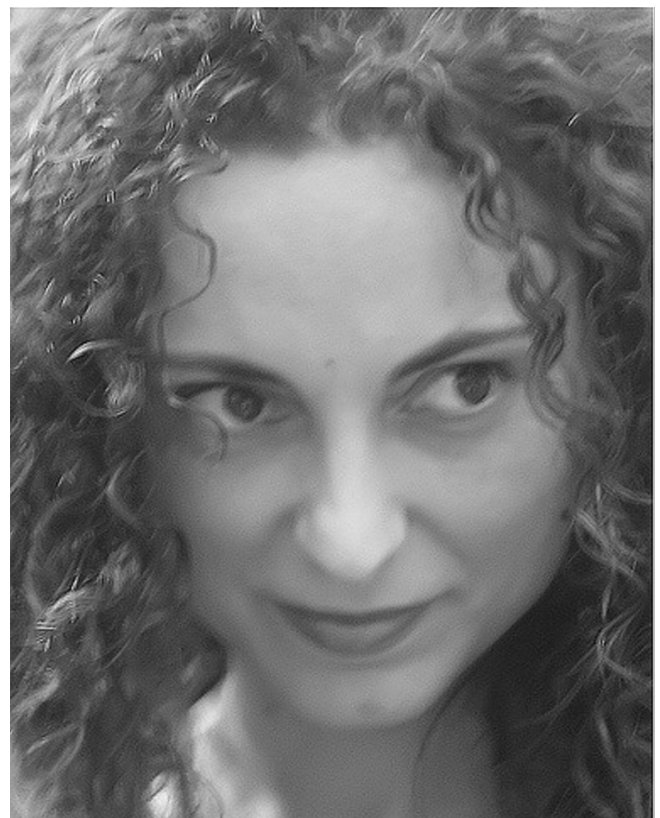
This deadly mistake destroys many marriages.

Married men “have so much trouble” because their wives fear, despise, and personalize (they take as a personal affront) the deepest sexual longings of their husbands. You admit to being hurt, simply because your husband was finally honest with you. What if he had shared his deepest sexual fantasies with you? I’m betting that, based on your reaction to the little information he did offer, you would shut him down.

A husband confesses that he finds other women attractive, and instead of saying, “Well, that’s normal, let’s go to the mall,” the wife says things like, “*What?! I’m not enough for you?* Gee, I’m sorry I’m so *ugly* compared to these *other* women! Why don’t you *love* me anymore? What do you want me to be, some sort of *whore?*”

Wives say this kind of thing a lot, including the italic placement. Self-obsessed, insecure people (the offended wives) easily overlook logic. As soon as your husband realized that you were hurt (not sure how you communicated that), he shut down. I’m just guessing this. He saw he was in trouble, decided to stick with the vague “some troubles,” and stopped talking.

You don’t need to simply be “thankful” that your husband hasn’t had “a major problem in this area.” Be proactive. Ask him more questions. Encourage honesty. Make him feel safe. Promise him that you won’t be



hurt or roll your eyes at him. Ask about his deepest sexual fantasies. He just wants to be understood, appreciated, and accepted by the woman he loves more than any other woman on the planet: you.

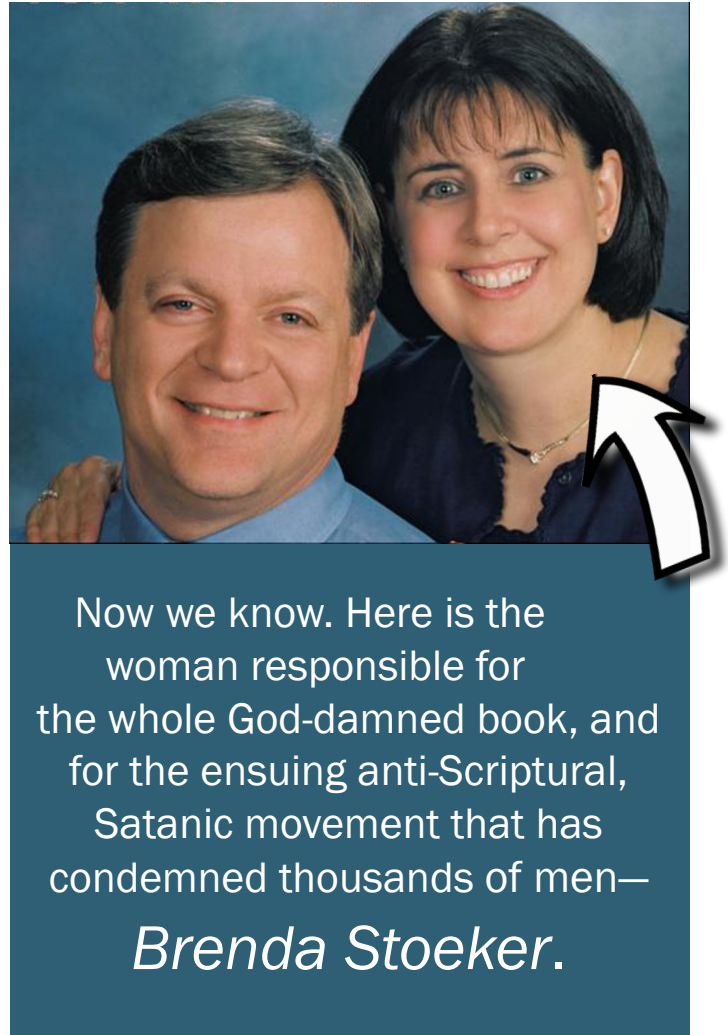
Cathy leans toward mercy as well. “My husband is regularly bombarded with sexy images, and I was pleased with his honesty regarding that,” she said. “I want to know the temptations he faces. It will only help me be more sympathetic to his plight. I didn’t feel betrayed because he’s proven faithful in his battle. Other women are not so lucky” (pgs. 34-35).

Dear Cathy: Thank God for you! I hear nothing here from you about being angry with your husband, or letting his normal desires make you feel less of a person. I admire your maturity; I’m thankful for it. Yours is a healthy sense of self. Yes, you *do* want to know the temptations your husband faces. Your sympathy is just what he needs to encourage him to express even deeper feelings and emotions to you, which will open up deeper levels of trust between you both. This will do wonders for your sex life, Cathy. Men just want to be known by the most important woman in the world to them: their wife. Being completely known by you is the most erotic thing he can imagine. No porn site can provide that for him. That’s why these experiences leave him ultimately disappointed. *He wants to unburden his sexual soul to an uncondemning woman who loves him unconditionally.* For a man, this is the mother lode of happiness.

I love what you said about not feeling betrayed. Again, yours is a rare maturity. Your husband has proven himself. For years and years he has shown you he does *not* want any other woman. He wants you. You instinctively know and feel this. Other women are not so lucky because those other women are not as sympathetic as you. They think that “laying the law down” is going to reform “the pervert.” They think that giving their husbands *Every Man’s Battle* will make the husbands kiss them gingerly on the cheek and love them forever—rather than eventually resent them, blow up, and somehow compromise the marriage. Keep up the good work, Cathy. Please give this article and my other articles to your friends.

Enter Fred’s wife Brenda

I do not personally know either Fred Stoeker or his wife Brenda. I do not blame Brenda for Fred being as hopelessly religious as he is, although, from the following quote, I suspect that she’s a large part of the reason that



Now we know. Here is the woman responsible for the whole God-damned book, and for the ensuing anti-Scriptural, Satanic movement that has condemned thousands of men—
Brenda Stoeker.

Fred became a beauty-denying, law-attempting, grace-challenged Pharisee.

Brenda, Fred’s wife, also participated in the interviews. She summarized the typical female response: “I don’t want to sound mean, but because women don’t generally experience this problem, it seems to us that some men are uncontrolled perverts who don’t think about anything but sex. It even affects my trust in men, knowing that pastors and deacons could have this problem. I don’t like it that men lustfully take advantage of women in their thoughts, although I realize that women can be largely to blame because of what they wear” (pg. 34).

Okay. Oh, boy. Here it is, then: “Uncontrolled perverts who don’t think about anything but sex.” There’s the whole problem, right there. Among Christian wives especially, this *is* the generally accepted attitude towards Christian husbands who are *supposed* to be Jesus-loving God-fearers, but who instead are: “Uncontrolled perverts who don’t think

about anything but sex.” Christian wives can dress it up; they can use qualifying phrases like, “I don’t want to sound mean,” “it seems to us” and “*some* men are uncontrolled perverts,” but the underlying sentiment is, *this man is so far off the rails he’s not even headed for the train station any more.*

What else explains such an awful book as, *Every Man’s Battle*? If there were not a market for Christian wives being repulsed by and ultimately hoping to reform their perverted husbands, curing them of their hyperbolic sex drives (I almost wrote “God-given” there in front of “sex drives,” but these Christian women don’t see it that way), the book never could have sold as many copies as it has, condemning as many men as it has, justifying as many angry, jealous wives as it has.

In my opinion, the Brenda Stoekers of the world are to blame. So yes, I guess I do saddle Brenda with the lion’s share of responsibility for the sexual anomaly and religious zealot that is Fred Stoeker and his God-damned book.

At the end of the paragraph, Brenda modifies her opinion of males based on new information: *there are so darn many of us*. Poor Brenda; she has to face this disturbing fact. In my opinion, the addendum is a day late; she’s already exposed her gut. But now she reluctantly admits—

It’s at least *some* comfort to know that *many* men have this problem. Since most men are affected, we really can’t call you guys perverts.

Fred himself comments on this comment—

Gee, thanks Brenda. Actually, you made an important point, and it brings up additional thoughts from a man’s perspective. We men understand your shock. After all, we’re often overwhelmed in the sexual area, and we loathe it ourselves. That’s why we want mercy, although we know we don’t deserve mercy. How much mercy can be found in a woman’s heart when she looks upon this problem? Not surprisingly, it depends upon her husband’s situation. There’s a natural tug-of-war in the hearts of women between pity and disgust, between mercy and judgment.

No one still wandering the dead slopes of Sinai—as does Fred—thinks he deserves mercy. Brenda should have stoned him; Fred knows this. Under the law of Moses,

“GEE, THANKS, BRENDA.”

—Fred Stoeker



mercy is the best one can hope for. Under law, there is no such thing as justification; no such thing as being declared righteous by God. For certain, Fred has never heard of

such a thing as justification, not with his Christ, not with his wife. No sinner such as he deserves mercy, not from Brenda, not from Jesus. Justification is an objective declaration of God functioning irrespective of human behavior. Mercy, on the other hand, is a conditional boon granted to worthy sufferers, law-followers, and those who still struggle optically against billboards.

Brenda recently told me that even now, all these years later, she occasionally watches my eyes when we go past billboards, just to check on me. With the good habits in place, I haven’t failed her, but who needs that pressure if you aren’t ready for it? (pg. 117).

Poor Fred. His wife still struggles between pity and disgust, mercy and judgment.

And so does his Christ.

Fred loathes himself. All that stands between Fred and his self-made hell is another day of shouldering his self-imposed boulder up another self-imposed hill. He dare not falter, dare not fail. He lives—or tries to live—beneath this burden, a mistake away from disgust, judgment, death. In *this* world, Fred fears his wife; in the next, it will be his Christ. *Will Fred Stoeker ever be good enough?*

No.

Where is grace and understanding? These blessed boons still await Fred, out in some green, sun-filled prairie, far from Sinai’s condemning cliffs. But are not grace and understanding also in the heart of the God of heaven, Who sent His Son to save us?

Yes, they are.

They are also, I pray, in the hearts of the wives now reading my words. —MZ (*To be continued.*)