



Lecture Notes for Audio Week 3

Principle 3: Change Yourself, Not Him

Answer this question: How much time and energy do you spend trying to change your husband? We try to change our husbands by praying, wishing, nagging, lecturing, explaining, begging, threatening, controlling, or manipulating. True, they do need to change, but the problem is that we are powerless to make them change.

Powerless means “without power.” Can you stand at the seashore and command the waves to stop? Can you ask the sun not to rise? Can you make your husband change? No! So if you can’t do it, why waste your life trying?

The only sure way to make your life better is to focus on changing yourself. And I don’t mean changing yourself to please your husband, hoping he will change as a result. I mean changing yourself to live in a healthier way in your marriage and life.

Scriptural Principles

- God’s Word tells us clearly that each of us is responsible for ourselves and we will each stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of our lives—not our husbands’ lives (2 Corinthians 5:10).
- We are to take the plank out of our own eyes before commenting on the splinter in the other person’s eye (Matthew 7:3-5). (This applies even if you think your husband has the plank and you have the splinter.)
- Galatians 6:4-5 says, “Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else.” We have to do what is right, even when our husband’s aren’t.

So what are some of the things you can do to change yourself that will make your life better, even if HE never changes?

1. **Take the responsibility to live your life.**

Give up being a victim or a martyr. You can’t change your life when you don’t even accept that you have the power or right to change it. Victims and martyrs go around acting like they have no other option but to continue bearing whatever life is handing them. Not true. You always have choices. Even if you choose to stay in your difficult marriage because you believe God wants you to, you can know you are choosing to stay. That gives you a sense of power: you are doing it because you believe you should. That means you aren’t a victim—you are a person of conviction who is doing what she believes God wants her to do.

Martha came to Jesus in Luke 10:38-42 and complained that she was the only one working to prepare things for him. She came to Jesus with the view that she had no choice but to do all the work and she was angry that her sister didn't do as much as she was doing. Jesus recognized there was another choice: She could choose to sit and relax and just be with him. She didn't have to sacrifice and do it all or anything for that matter!

2. Let go of the obsession over him.

Whatever takes up your mental and emotional energy and robs you of the ability to live your life is your obsession.

Philippians 4:8-9 tells us to choose what we think about and 2 Corinthians 10:5 tell us we can take our thoughts captive. Try the following things to control your thoughts:

- Don't do things that increase your obsession with what your husband is doing. Don't check up on him, watch him, listen to his conversations, stay home to watch him, check his wallet, follow him, call him over and over, or read his e-mails (unless you need to do this to find out what is going on in order to make decisions).
- Keep your head where your feet are. Concentrate on what you are doing in that moment and don't let your thoughts wander.
- Yell "stop" aloud or to yourself every time you find your mind wandering onto him again.
- Find a phrase that reminds you that you are powerless over him and say it over and over. I say the Serenity Prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference." An abbreviated version might be "Can't change him." "Mind your own business" was another phrase I said to myself.
- Turn on the radio or listen to music.

3. Understand your past.

You need insight into yourself: your childhood, your family you grew up in, your past relationships, and your personality. This helps you get insight into how you are reacting to people and what you can change in yourself.

4. Admit your part in the problem.

Even if it is small compared to his, you need to apologize and own your mistakes, and you can't expect or demand an apology from him in return. "Changing yourself" is about you doing what is right for you. The only exception to this would be if admitting your faults would be

used abusively against you or jeopardize your safety. In that case, doing what you need to do to protect yourself is more important.

5. Feel and own your feelings.

Many of us have denied, repressed, and suppressed our feelings for so long that we don't even know what we are feeling. Feelings are a window into your soul. You have to feel them to deal with them. Otherwise, they go underground and make you sick emotionally, physically, or relationally. King David spoke about his feelings openly to God, and God helped him choose how to respond to the powerful feelings that raged inside him.

When you feel your feelings, it is tempting to blame them on your husband or another person. After all, what he or she did made you mad, sad, embarrassed, disappointed, or hurt. But the reality is that you are the one that had the feeling and that means you have to choose what to do about it.

6. Check your motives.

Jesus spent much of his time on this earth going beneath the exterior. He looked at people's actions and then asked, "Why are you doing that?"

Difficult marriages are complicated. There are many decisions that have to be made and many conflicts to deal with about what to do or say. There aren't any one-size-fits-all answers. The only way you can figure out what to do is to check your motives. If your motive is pure, good, and healthy, then you can take the action; if your motive isn't pure, good, or healthy, then you shouldn't take the action.

7. Adjust your expectations.

The easiest way to protect your emotions, conserve your energy, and get off the roller coaster of hope and then disappointment, is to accept who your husband is. You don't have to approve or like it. Just face the reality, so you won't keep hoping for things that won't happen. Proverbs 13:12 tells us that hope that's not fulfilled makes our hearts sick. Instead of fighting reality, accept it, and then you can decide what to do about it!

8. Use your influence.

As a woman of God, you have the power to influence the mood of your home. Proverbs 14:1 says, "The wise woman builds her house but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down." A wise woman builds her home and her life by changing herself not by wasting her

