

The Suitable Helper - Getting It Right (Genesis 2:18)

Genesis 2:18

*Then the LORD God said,
"It is not good for the man to be alone;
I will make him a **helper** suitable for him."*

Good for Adam

Adam deeply felt the empty place which only Eve could fill. When she finally appeared, he broke into song (not the average husband's reaction when his wife walks into the room). Even the sight of her brought him joy. His empty place was gone. "Not good" changed to incredible.

Good for Eve?

Eve was drawn to Adam as well. The "oneness" God describes points to their shared delight. I like that. That's not what bothers me.

What bothers me – and bothers a great many other women – is the suitable helper part. That part sounds like a put down. Our culture agrees. It sees helpers as mere assistants – perhaps valued but still in training. "*Sweetheart, would you help me? Shine this flashlight right HERE so I can see to hook up the cable TV.*" Our culture has fed us a stereotype.

Now I've held many a flashlight to help with tasks that I have no clue how to complete. No problem. But does being a helper mean that I never have a clue? Is that Eve's example for us wives? Does "help" always imply a secondary level of knowledge or a lack of skill? I don't think so. More importantly, God doesn't think so.

Beyond the Stereotype

God doesn't share our stereotype. Nowhere in the Bible does He even suggest that "helper" applies only to those needing guidance, whether wives, trainees, or small children. Quite the contrary. When God says "helper" he refers to someone with great skill – someone like Himself. Of the 21 uses of "helper" in the Old Testament, only two refer to Eve, three leave the helper unnamed, and sixteen (that's sixteen) describe God. And He, unlike our culture, illustrates "the suitable helper" perfectly.

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What characterizes God's help? Three things stand out. He has skills which we lack. He is aware of our needs. And He is for us – He loves to supply what we need. Skills, awareness, and love. Let's look at these three more carefully.

It should come as no great surprise that we need God's skills. While we may not have a clue, He does. We *need* His help, and there's no shame in asking. There's no shame in asking other people for help either. Consider the "HELP" menu available on our computers. If we type in a request it (usually) tells us what we need to complete our task. The people who provide this information do so to help us out of a jam. They can do this because they know something that we don't. They have skills which we lack. If we aren't willing to accept their help, we likely will stay stuck. We need their input. It works the same way in marriages. God has given wives skills that their husbands lack. No shame here, just reality. Husbands need the skilled help their wives can provide.

What about awareness? Here's where "suitable" comes in. This word actually means "opposite." Not opposite as in adversarial, but opposite in the British sense: standing face-to-face, positioned across from someone so we're able to see them. So we can be aware of them. Aware as God is aware of us. A "suitable" helper is in position to see what her husband needs. Her awareness lets her help be appropriate, both in timing and in content.

But timing and content fall flat if our intent includes smugness or a hunger for victory. Help, true help, comes from a heart of love. Great communication skills and superior knowledge fade into uselessness if we don't love. (See 1 Corinthians 13.) God loves us. He loves to benefit us. Our help should imitate Him.

Wife and Husband: Both Like God

Ephesians 5:23 clearly parallels husbands with God: *For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church....* This statement often stirs up a negative reaction, and no wonder – human husbands all too often have carried out their role rather badly. But that's not the only reason headship gets a bad rap. Headship also seems unfair. Do only husbands get to be like God? That can't be right. And it isn't.

Look again beyond the stereotype. God never says that "helper" applies only to those needing guidance, He applies that word to those *giving* guidance. Like He guides us. Like wives guide their husbands. The word "helper" clearly parallels wives with God.

***God intends both roles – helper and head –
to clearly illustrate His role towards us.***

Wives illustrate God as helper; husbands illustrate God as head. Our callings may differ in expression, but they share equal importance and equal dignity. The Bible makes that exquisitely clear.

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