

# Home Alone?

*Barbara*



*Randall*

A pastor and spouse faithfully care for and minister to others. How wonderful when they find opportunity to be together at home. However, *they can be together at home but feel alone.* We know, because this has been a long-time challenge for us. We are two, unique individuals, committed to be one in marital union and ministry. Each of us has needs, but it is so easy to meet the needs of everyone else before each other's. We have traveled to and fellowshiped with pastors and spouses for many years. We know that this is a wide-spread matter. *How do we care for people and still have something left for each other?* Barbara has some thoughts to share with husbands and Randall will share thoughts for wives, from what we are learning and experiencing. Thank you for your dedication to ministry. Thank you for your dedication to your spouse.

Randall & Barbara Bach

# Together at Home — Feeling Alone

By Barbara J. Bach

©2006

Dear husband, pastor, minister,

You, our husbands, have wonderful qualities. We are very grateful and thankful for the fact that you serve and love God with your whole heart. You are loyal, dedicated, faithful, hard working, and visionary.

God joined you together with your wife who loves serving in ministry together with you. It is a joy. God completes you with gifts each brings into this union. Whether it's to come along side with a gift of administration, meeting your needs at home with meals, baking your favorite dessert, care of your clothes, our children, keeping a home that's a sanctuary for us when we come apart from the world (church world, too) God knew what each of us needed. Yet frequently, when wives know they can safely share, they report feeling lonely in their marriages.

How could we feel lonely and unhappy? This is so important to understand: Even though we seek the Lord to fill and satisfy our spiritual emptiness, we still have needs that only you, our husband, can meet.

Ruth Bell Graham said, *It is a foolish woman who expects her husband to be to her that which only Jesus Christ Himself can be:*

*for husbands*

# Happy at Home — Dont Feel Alone

by Randall A. Bach

©2006

Dear Minister's Wife,

It has been said that behind every great man is a great woman. "A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies" Proverbs 31:10 (NIV). And, some might also say that behind every defeated man is a woman haranguing him with, "I told you so." Or, as Proverbs puts it, "A quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping on a rainy day..." Proverbs 27:15 (NIV). Whew! That is a range of influence and power!

Isn't it amazing how God can weave a man and woman together into a piece of fabric, stronger together than the individual threads? Our strengths and weaknesses can complete each other. And, it sometimes also requires considerable grace for a man and a woman to become and remain one. Our wiring is unique from each other. Yet, how beautiful it is when husband and wife lovingly work at understanding each other and growing together. It doesn't just happen. In fact, without determined work it won't happen or continue.

John Gray wrote a famous book, *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, to describe the differences between the sexes. Truth is, even after years of marriage those differences can still baffle and exasperate husband and

*for wives*

- a. *Always ready to forgive*
- b. *Totally understanding*
- c. *Unendingly patient*
- d. *Invariably tender and loving*
- e. *Unfailing in every area*
- f. *Anticipating every need*
- g. *Making more than adequate provision*

**Scripture never said  
Adam met her  
aloneness! HELP!**

*Such expectations put a man under an impossible strain.*

I'm sure you husbands can say "amen" to that! We don't expect you to be Jesus (but the next best thing?).

Dr. David Ferguson shares, *The Book of Genesis recounts the day that mankind lost fellowship with the Creator, Genesis 3:1-24 details how Adam and Eve fell from their position of perfect communion and harmony with God to one of animosity and strife. We must, however, look back to the second chapter of Genesis. Before Adam's fallenness, God declared his state of aloneness, and described it as 'not good.'* Our Creator is acutely aware of man's condition: *we are both fallen and alone* (Ferguson, Relational Foundations, 2004).

God gave Eve to Adam to help his aloneness. But, what about Eve? Scripture never said Adam met her aloneness! HELP!

*for husbands*

wife. For instance, why can a man come home and seem so unaware of and inattentive to his wife, so "out of it" when she tries to talk with him? Absolutely no attempt will be made here to justify husbands for failing to lovingly tend to their wife's needs. Rather, I want to try to help you see inside what makes that man, who can seem so dense and so out of touch, tick. I will make some generalizations while acknowledging that there are always exceptions to every generalization. However, exceptions do not invalidate the generalization as it is applied to many people.

I believe men and women have different senses of space, in terms of intimacy. By that I mean a woman loves to be touched and at least noticed by her husband when they are home together. After all, it seems like such a small thing. However, a man's sense of space feels fulfilled when he and his wife are in the same room or house. Everything seems fine to him when he and his wife

**He does not  
recognize that what  
seems so fine to him  
at home is so  
inadequate for her.**

are just together in the same proximity. His lack of thought about filling his wife's sense of space is not intentional. He just does not feel like his wife feels and does not readily recognize that what seems so fine to him at home is so inadequate to her. And, he does not understand why his wife is so unresponsive to his urge for intimacy, which definitely requires aligning a sense of space. The inborn

*for wives*

We understand what you are called to. We appreciate your gifts and calling. We don't even ask for much except knowing that we *feel* loved. You tell us you love us but we need more than words. There are some simple ways that help us know and *feel* your love.

I talked to some ministry wives who shared the following:

*We take time for a cup of tea each evening and talk. It would mean so much if he would serve me the tea instead of waiting for me to make it. It's a matter of pushing a button on the microwave to heat up the water.*

*If I say I'm cold it would mean so much if he would offer to bring me a sweater or blanket.*

*To pat me while walking by or kissing me in passing would mean so much.*

*It would mean so much to ask me how I am doing throughout my day. To be in tune with what I am doing or saying would mean so much. Please listen and let me know you are not afar off. That would mean responding to what I've just said.*

That last comment reminds me of a commercial on TV. The husband is reading the newspaper in the kitchen. His wife enters dressed in a slinky, light blue dress and asks, "Honey, does this make me look fat?" Without even looking at her

***for husbands***

strength of a man to focus on battle, work, task, or ministry can also sometimes cause him to seem distracted and only partially present when his wife speaks to him. And, he may seem more distracted as he ages (I have always maintained that, whatever you are like in life, you become more of it as you become older).

Here is what can happen. The wife's frustration with her unaware and apparently insensitive husband grows and deepens from hurt into anger. She reacts to him in anger and, with every continued failure of sensitivity on his part, which can begin to appear as with malice, adds a burning coal to the furnace in her heart. Each continued offense of insensitivity becomes compounded as it is added to the indictment. Unfortunately, anger and lashing out will not improve conditions. In fact, it is more like tossing a cup of gasoline on an already inflamed heart. And, much to her frustration, retaliation against her husband accomplishes

**What can a wife do?  
How can she "fix"  
her husband?**

little more than driving a wedge deep between them. To him, such emotionalism is but another, eye rolling, "Must be her time of the month" assessment.

So, what can a wife do? There is little doubt that this apparent denseness on the part of a husband is a major cause of misunderstanding, disappointment, and hurt in many marital relationships. How can she "fix" her husband?

***for wives***

he offered a rote, "You betcha!" She turns around and walks out with a look of disgust. Can we say "Not in tune?"

Pastor James Merritt says, "*Women's needs are not sexual. They want to be HELD, HEARD, AND HUGGED.*" Please don't misunderstand us; we are not against sexual intimacy.

**You might be amazed at how it really takes so little to mean so much.**

But, you might be amazed at how it really takes so little to mean so much. All that is required is *sensitivity toward your wife's basic*

*needs*. God wired her that way. She is your helpmate and she needs you to demonstrate your love in such a way in order to be fulfilled to minister with you. We know when you tell us you love us you mean it with your whole heart but we need attention before we drop into bed and get our hugs, etc., etc.

David Ferguson has some special advice for husbands (Intimate Encounters, 1997). He says: *The three most important things in dealing with a wife sexually are:*

1. *Sex must become something you give to your wife and not something you take.*
2. *You will improve your sexually intimacy immensely if you learn to give first to your wife emotionally.*
3. *Increase your nonsexual touching.*

*for husbands*

Let's start with what is probably obvious by now; he won't be "fixed" by anger, harsh words, or emotional fire/ice. In fact, what speck of sensitivity that exists in the husband may just blow away.

*I strongly believe that wives do not come close to appreciating the power that is theirs.* It is a major miscalculation when a woman abandons the power of femininity to attempt to do battle or bluster with a man. She has then walked away from her strength to venture into a man's world of power.

One Christian woman recently confessed, "I am shocked and disappointed to discover how much feminism has seeped into and affects my thinking and actions."

Shouting, screaming, going "ballistic" or sullen only diminishes the wife in the eyes of her husband. Only a Milquetoast man, willing to defer to his wife just to maintain peace, will bend to female, tough guy bluster or threats of a blow up. That condition is a sad, marital dysfunction where the woman rules by emotional blackmail. Truth is, female brassiness turns male hearts and ears to brass. Something dies.

**Wives do not come close to appreciating the power that is theirs.**

**Female brassiness turns male hearts and ears to brass.**

*for wives*

Randall gave me permission to use an illustration he has shared with men concerning focus. When driving on the interstate he comments on those drivers who don't look down the road. They will come zooming up beside us then

**He has looked right past me. That is when we feel resentful.**

slam on their breaks because a truck is just ahead of them and they can't get over in the passing lane. Instead, if they looked ahead, they

would have gotten over in the passing lane in time so as not to have to put on their breaks. Randall uses this illustration that he looks so far down the road in his vision and focus that he didn't realize that I am splattered on the front bumper. He has looked right past me. That is when we feel resentful. We want to know we are a priority before the church/ministry you serve. When we feel we are on hold till the next crunch time is past (and they seem to run together) we begin to resent whatever it is that takes priority and occupies your time and effort.

**We want to know that we are a priority before the church/ministry you serve.**

In his article, "When The Pastor's Spouse Resents the Church" ([www.buildingchurchleaders.com](http://www.buildingchurchleaders.com)) Louis McBurney lists basic principles to avoid and solve resentment:

*for husbands*

You are probably aware of marriages where the husband abuses the wife, if not physically perhaps emotionally and verbally. That is an offense against God and a violation of His word (Ephesians 5:25-33). However, Barbara and I have also seen too many Christian husband/wife relationships (including some pastor homes) where the woman virtually rules by threat of emotion and the man yields for the sake of peace. A controlling pattern sets in and becomes a way of life,

**The woman virtually rules by threat of emotion.**

an unhealthy basis for marriage and a violation of God's Word (Titus 2:4-5). She dominates decision-making. It is an aberration of God's plan for spiritual headship in the home. There is no need to even discuss how to apply what the Bible says about the wife submitting to her husband in such marriages because no semblance of submission exists. Sadly, most of those wives would deny that they are controlling because they are unable to recognize it.

So, what do I mean by the power of femininity? I am not just referring to sexual seduction. Rather, I call your attention to the power of tenderness, vulnerability, and loving communication. Those are influential strengths, not weaknesses. It is a power that grows by consistent accumulation, not by intermittent, "I'm having a good day," interruptions. It is a power that is sown over time and reaps a harvest in time. It is not manipulative in a self-serving,

*for wives*

1. What a resentful wife needs most is to *feel* her husband's care about what's troubling her.
2. Your wife needs your permission to be angry. She needs to *feel* supported and be given ample time to resolve her hurts.
3. Encourage her to find support outside the church.

Christopher P. Johnson states in his book, "The Power That Women Have" ( Fishnet Publications, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1998), that when a woman's heart becomes hard, she generally becomes cold and stubborn. Her heart becomes hypothermic, sort of frozen and numb. We have the sinful tendency to want what we want. When our needs and longings aren't being met in marriage, unless we respond to God, we will resort to some fleshly ploy or strategy to ensure that our needs will be met. Johnson calls this "playing negative games." These are some of those negative games:

1. Criticizing
2. Blaming
3. Shaming
4. Withholding
5. Withdrawing
6. Silence

**Her heart becomes hypothermic, sort of frozen and numb.**

*for husbands*

Delilah-like way. It is a loving winsomeness that draws her husband's heart to her, igniting and turning his heart toward caring sensitivity and a desire to listen. It earns her a voice that she can teach her husband how to act in a loving manner toward her. It enables her to communicate about her needs and desires in a way that her husband will hear in a new way. It leads to emotional connection. It helps her to guide her husband into a walk of understanding her world. Many women simply do not grasp this power that is available to them, perhaps because they have seldom seen it modeled. And, it is also perhaps accurate that many men have never seen a man, up close, who is truly loving and sensitive to his wife while also remaining masculine. We have a lot of learning and growing to do together!

**Loving winsomeness draws her husband's heart to her.**

The next time your husband acts like an unhearing oaf you can try to ignore it while adding it to the record of offense, clobber him with a verbal tirade, or give him the well-worn silent treatment while answering his question about what is wrong with a wounded, "Nothing," response. Or, you can craft an approach that helps him to understand how your heart longs for him to let you in. If you are consumed with irritation or anger then now is not the time; remember the cup of gasoline in your hand!

*for wives*

I know we wives take you, our ministry husbands, for granted and we are sorry for that. We are blessed! Thank you for listening and taking thought. We accept responsibility that, when we speak, we are to do so with love (Ephesians 4:15).

*Barbara*

## Recommendations:

1. Individually complete the Intimacy Needs Assessment Tool, by Intimate Life Ministries, and then compare and discuss your unique needs and how they can be fulfilled.
2. Individually complete the Marital Intimacy Inventory, by the Center for Relational Care, and then spend quality time together to discuss your responses.
3. Write a letter to God, expressing your needs, feelings, and desires for your marriage and ministry. Be lovingly honest. Set aside time to talk and, perhaps, share your letters to God, not as demands, but as tender and sincere expressions from your hearts. Discuss practical ways you can serve as God's answer.
4. Pray together about renewed and fresh commitments you will make to each other. No aspect of ministry is more important than ministry to your spouse.

*for husbands*

I can hear some wives' saying, "I tried that, Randall." I respect that, but was it consistent, or intermingled with the wrong kind of interaction? Was it an interruption from the norm or have you made it the norm? If it takes time to teach an old dog new tricks... lovingly draw him into your world. However, you have to be able to see a half full instead of half empty glass. You can help (train?) your husband to "get it" by noticing and affirming when he demonstrates caring sensitivity and a listening ear to you. That doesn't mean telling him it is about time. It is not a lecturish tone of voice talking down to him. Remember, brass leads to brass. Rather, it is a loving expression of deep appreciation that reaches a man's heart: "Honey, it means so much to me that you took time to listen and think about my needs. It makes me feel so loved and appreciated. Thank you. I love you."

**Lovingly draw him into your world.**

**A loving expression of deep appreciation reaches a man's heart.**

You can help your husband to be the man of God and responsive mate that you desire. The power is at your disposal, and it is an approach that honors God.

*Randall*

*for wives*