

# She is Not Your Helper

*Barrington H. Brennen, November 26, 2013*

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As we celebrate National Women's Week in our country, I pause to remind us that God did not create women to "help men out" but to be their equal partners and companions every where on earth. God's original design was not for men to be in a leadership position while women just come along to help them as assistant leaders. I know this has been the notion for thousands of years, but it is a misinterpretation of Scripture. The King James Version of Genesis 2:18 states: "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." Many other versions translate the last part of the verse this way: "a helper that is right for him."

The words "help meet" and "helper" have been causing a stir for thousands of years. Many interpret this text to mean that the woman's purpose is to help the man out by being his aid, maid, or servant. Men are taught that women are to stand beside them as support, but not really as their equal. The thought is that while the man has the position of leadership, the woman is to provide assistance to his leadership. This is a false assumption. To understand that both male and female were created in a position of equal leadership and power sharing, we first need to understand an earlier Scripture found in Genesis 1:26-28: "Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky. So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in sea. . ."

## **COMPANIONS NOT MAID**

Two very important principles arising from these verses are: 1) Both male and female are given equal power and authority over the earth and not over each other. 2) Both male and female are created in God's image. These are important points because the underlying reason for violence against women is that men are taught that women do not have equal power with them, they do not have the same authority, and that they are of lesser value. How could this be so when both male and female were created in God's image? In a previous article on the subject, I wrote: "Together they (Adam and Eve) reflected God's image. In essence, male dominance teaches that males were created in the image of God and females were created in the image of man. There are no Biblical texts or teachings that support the idea that Eve was to be subordinated to Adam."

Until men understand that women are of equal value and have equal authority with them in the home, church, community, and country, violence against women will continue. This brings me to the meaning of the word "helper" in Genesis that is so often misused. The original word in Hebrew is "Ezer." It simply means someone just like him, a companion, or a partner. Note carefully that "helper" is used in Scripture not to suggest a hierarchical order, but a person with power and strength. Hebrew 10:13 states: "The Lord is my helper."

Theologian Wendy Francisco states that "everywhere else in Scripture that uses "ezer" describes the coming help of God, or, in a few cases, an army. In short, there is no hint of hierarchy in it." The clear meaning of the word "ezer" is one who is in position

“corresponding to him,” “his counterpart, his complement.” Power or authority “over” someone is out of the picture here. What I find interesting is that Scripture talks about God as an “ezer” – helper. If God, our helper, is not inferior to us or subordinated to us, why are women subordinated to men?

### **RAISING OUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS**

We can stop the violence against women and girls in our country by educating our children that boys and girls are equal. Boys and men should not be granted any special privilege that girls and women are not granted. They are not in charge of women and girls. They do not own them. They are not entitled to decide for them or place limits on them as they seek to realize their full potential.

Several years ago, I wrote an article entitled: “Mom Ruins Son’s Life.” I said: “A major reason many of our Bahamian men are messing up their marriages or romantic relationships is because their mothers made them believe that the best way to build men’s character is to serve them as masters. Instead of building responsibility and self-discipline in their sons by allowing them to enjoy the privilege of doing things for themselves, mothers spoil their sons by picking up their underwear on the floor, washing their dishes, and ironing their clothes. According to these mothers, boys are just to play ball, rake the yard, and clean cars. The girls are to wash the dishes, cook, sew, and clean the house. This is a great disservice a mother can do to her son. In fact, she is not only hurting her son but her son’s marriage and her son’s sons.

### **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Violence against women and girls is a global crisis. Violence against women and girls at the highest conceptual level includes violating their human rights and civil liberties and depriving them of individual freedom. At the personal level it includes rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, genital mutilation, economic abuse (withholding money), emotional/psychological abuse, intimidation, verbal abuse, honor killing, acid throwing, rape in war zones, gender selection (abortion or abandonment of baby girls), forced prostitution, trafficking, etc.

Here are some global facts. Up to 7 in 10 women around the world experience physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lifetime. As many as 1 in 4 women experience physical or sexual violence during pregnancy. An estimated one million children, mostly girls, enter the sex trade each year. Worldwide, about 50 percent of sexual assaults are committed against girls under the age 16. The truth is there is no such statistics of violence against men around the world. We must stop ignoring these horrendous acts of violence and statistics. Particularly, the Church must admit that it has committed a grave error in devaluating women by subordinating them to men and begin the task of reparation and healing by preaching the right theology.

Remember men, women are not our assistants, maids, cooks and sex toys. They are our equal companions with equal value, voice, vote, and power.

What are you going to do to help end violence against women? We can begin by educating our children about gender equality. Let us start now.