

When Your Wife Questions Your Counsel

In chapter two of *A Wife's Secret to Happiness* my wife, Jen, talks about the value of a godly husband and how she struggles with disqualifying me from a leadership role in her life.

The idea of being a godly man to give my wife support and advice sounds great in theory. But in actuality there's a lot of responsibility and uncharted territory that needs to be uncovered.

In my experience, there are common lies men believe that hinder us from giving our wives counsel. And there are common lies women believe that hinder them from receiving or wanting our counsel. Here are a few common falsehoods the enemy tries to sneak in, and some truths to oppose his scheming:

Lie Some Wives Believe: He doesn't care.

Truth to Affirm to Your Wife: You love her. You want good things for her life.

Lie Some Husbands Believe: She's exaggerating her feelings, it's really not that bad.

Truth to Affirm to Yourself: Her level of emotion may be disproportionate to the event, but there's an underlying reason why.

Tip for Your Response: Demonstrate your love and care by opening yourself up to talk about what she feels, even if it's difficult. Ask *why* she feels that way. If your actions in the past have not demonstrated the level of care and consideration you rightly want to show your wife, apologize and choose a different course next time. You can build a better habit.

Lie Some Wives Believe: His advice never works out.

Truth to Affirm to Your Wife: Sometimes your advice works out and sometimes it will fall flat. We are all human and you're working hard to lead and love her.

Lie Some Husbands Believe: She values other people's opinions more than mine.

Truth to Affirm to Yourself: She loves you. You have value in her eyes, and you have good insight to share. God wants to use you to do good to your wife, and that includes good in the words you speak to her.

Tip for Your Response: Because of bad past experiences—whether with you or with other leaders—your wife may not give you too many opportunities to give her advice. Don't rub this in her face or push your advice on her. Be open and ask if

she'd like to know your perspective on the issue at hand, and if she responds favorably, share with love.

Lie Some Wives Believe: If I ask him, then I have to do what he says.

Truth to Affirm to Your Wife: "Without counsel plans fail, but with *many* advisers they succeed" (Prov. 15:22—emphasis mine). "Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but *in an abundance of counselors* there is safety" (Prov. 11:14—emphasis mine). Scripture encourages everyone to seek wisdom and to find *many* trusted advisors. As her husband, you can be one of those contributing voices.

Lie Some Husbands Believe: My counsel is the only counsel she should need and it's disrespectful for her to ask for my advice and then do something different.

Truth to Affirm to Yourself: She's following biblical wisdom by seeking feedback from many trusted advisers, as long as their advice follows biblical principles. If what you're saying lines up with God's word and his voice in your life, she'll hear the same thing from the other trusted people in her life.

Tip for Your Response: Advocate for your wife to have access to the best information, even if that comes from a trusted source other than you. Part of this advocacy can look like you helping with research, or going to others you trust to contribute counsel. You're not passing the buck, you're putting yourself in her corner. If you feel like your wife is getting counsel from untrustworthy or harmful sources, talk with her about your concerns. This is another way to advocate for her good.

Lie Some Wives Believe: He's not wise enough to give me advice.

Truth to Affirm to Your Wife: Your wife may be blessed with wiser counselors. Friends and loved ones who've seen more, lived more, and who may even talk with God more than you do.

Lie Some Husbands Believe: I don't know how to lead or I'm not a good leader.

Truth to Affirm to Yourself: I look to Jesus for how to lead. I grow closer to him every day and as I grow closer to him, my leadership is refined. God always equips us to complete our callings, and part of your calling as a husband is to love and care for your wife.

For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. (Eph. 5:23, 25)

Tip for Your Response: Make it a habit to seek the Lord on her behalf when she asks you for guidance. God offers great wisdom that we could not hope to figure out on our own.

If you're uncomfortable with your wife seeking your advice, or unsure about your ability to give quality counsel, here are a few tips to get started:

- 1. Seek God with her.** Find time to pray about things together. Ask her to begin praying with you and asking God for insight in your individual quiet times.
- 2. Ask for time to think.** Jen likes to mull over a decision for days, sometimes weeks, then come to me, lay out the topic, and receive my immediate inspired wisdom right there on the spot. Most people can't offer sound advice like that, I know I can't. Don't hesitate to ask for time to think. Sometimes I ask other counselors in my life for feedback before I offer my thoughts.
- 3. Pay attention to entry level concerns in her life and ask if you can offer suggestions.** Is she having a problem at work? A relationship issue? Do you excel at time management or planning and see that you may be able to help her out with some current projects? Come to your wife and gently ask if you can offer some thoughts.

If this area represents a pain point in your marriage, give yourselves time and grace to grow into it. Giving counsel is an opportunity to express your love for your wife and to consider what is best from her. If you frame these conversations from the perspective of "how can I love her?" and "how can I do what's best for her?" then you'll put her in a position to receive your words well.