

Charlyne Cares

July 27, 2010

Each Tuesday Charlyne's husband, Bob, shares from the prodigal's perspective more than two decades after divorce and remarriage. Today he shares on a sensitive subject that could be hindering both prodigals and standers alike.

"It Has Arrived"

My new book "Looking Back 25 Years" is available to you from -

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A Sensitive Subject

*"All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved." **Ephesians 2:3-5***

Charlyne and I talk much about what brings prodigal spouses home, as well as what keeps them away. God has given me a burden to share, from a prodigal's perspective on an issue that could be a roadblock to healthy marriages, as well as to prodigals coming home.

Let me share a very personal incident that happened long before I started school. It took place one Saturday over half a century ago, but I can still recall the details. I was tagging along with my dad and another male family member on a short road trip. We had stopped in Golden Pond, KY at a dairy that also had an ice cream stand. After ordering, my dad and the other man were doing some nudging of each other and exchanging knowing smiles. At first, I did not know what they were reacting to. I stood on my tiptoes and peered over the ice cream counter and saw that the female scooping ice cream was wearing a low cut dress. Once back in the car nothing was said, but on that day, sitting in the back seat, eating an ice cream cone, young Bobby Steinkamp, determined that men enjoyed sneaking peeks into low cut blouses.

One day while eating lunch, I turned on the television to watch the news. The anchorwoman was wearing a revealing dress, so I changed channels. On the second station, the weather lady was dressed in much the same way. Suddenly, memories of ice cream at Golden Pond came rushing to my mind. The Lord was telling me to take a stand for modesty.

I acknowledge that you and I may be from different generations. Styles may change, but decency and godliness do not. Certain parts of the body are not exhibited in public in any generation, be it the first century or the

twenty-first century, nor should clothing be worn to accent those body parts, for the purpose of attracting attention from the opposite sex.

*"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." **Philippians 1:27***

"So what does this have to do with marriage restoration?" Everything, my sister - and my brother.

Brothers, you and I have a responsibility to our wives, to our marriages and to our God to treat every woman as a sister. That may mean changing the channel, or looking the other direction when we could take an unholy glance in a store. It may mean not complimenting the inappropriate appearance of a co-worker, who has dressed to receive compliments and lustful gazes.

Sir, I realize this is the style of modern fashion, but you and I both know how quickly our thoughts can take us from an "innocent" peek into adultery in our hearts. The ladies may not want to acknowledge what study after study has demonstrated about a man's zero to sixty in an instant sexual thought process, and how easily, and how often, it is ignited.

Here is the acid test for every man; Would we want another man looking at our wife in the way we are looking at another woman? Would we want any other man thinking those thoughts about our wife that we are thinking?

"I can't help what I think," someone is offering. Dwight L. Moody, the famed evangelist of another era once compared our thoughts to being like a hotel. "You can't help who walks through the lobby," Moody said, "But you have all the control over who gets a rented room."

Sister, why do you dress that way? Do you know what men are thinking when they see those tight jeans or too short shorts? Are you aware of what is exposed when you lean forward?

You may feel I am out of line today, but I earned my now- discarded merit badge in just the hard way. The price our family paid for it was a divorce. Thankfully I had a praying wife who would not give up until God brought me to my senses. While I was gone, if Charlyne had said she was standing, but was dressing to attract glances (or stares) from other men, a huge obstacle would have been placed in my path home.

"Do you want me to dress like I am in a convent?" If that is what it takes for you to dress with modesty and decency, that is what I (and every honorable man) would appreciate you doing.

"High necklines are not fashionable today." Neither is standing for a prodigal spouse, and you are doing that, so decency in dress should not pose a problem for you.

"Bob sounds fired up." Yes, Bob is very fired up. God created sex to be between a husband and wife, but the enemy is using dress (or maybe lack of dress) in an attempt to get me, and millions of other men, to have inappropriate sexual thoughts. I sense that some of the women dressing immodestly are not even aware of what they are doing to the minds and hearts of men.

There are four words Charlyne and I hear far too often from our new people; "They met at work." I also have a merit badge from 25 years ago for pretending to be an attentive husband, listening to what my wife is saying, while my thoughts were on a female co- worker.

Let's look at two scenarios. Jack works in an office with several women. Some are very modern in their dress. Each day at work is an adventure to see how low the necklines plunge. Their hair is perfect and they smell so

good. At quitting time, Jack goes home to his wife, wearing jeans and a sweatshirt, who has been chasing pre-schoolers all day. That night, is Jack thinking about an exhausted wife who talks too much, or the women who will be waiting at work the next day?

*"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." **Matthew 5:27-28***

Jill (an illustration and not our ministry assistant) is one of those women Jack works with. She has a husband of her own, but after years of marriage, he has put on weight and seldom notices how she looks when leaving for work. Jill dresses (and acts) to catch the stares and comments of her co-worker, Jack. Before long, Jack and Jill fall off the hill. Senseless things happen and families are nearly destroyed. The beginning of all the mess can be traced back to the provocative way someone dressed.

Charlyne and I have a female friend of many years. Years ago, she was in a similar situation to the fictional Jill. She found the Lord and He changed her totally. As long as we have known this woman, she has been modest in her dress. Beyond that, each time she bends forward in the presence of a man, she tactfully places a hand on her chest, as if pledging to the flag. In addition to covering anything that might be revealed, that woman is announcing "Not interested in your peeks." Charlyne and I pray that woman's husband might come to appreciate the gem of a wife he has praying and waiting for him.

Most of the standers we know are praying their spouse will be surrounded by godly influence. Would you want someone dressed like you, or peeking like you, to be an influence on your prodigal spouse? You might be the only godly example someone else's prodigal has. You and I cannot change all of society, but we have full control over our own lives, how we dress, what we do and how we represent Jesus.

*"Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." **Romans 13:13-14***

There is a tendency for some abandoned wives to look for affirmation from other men as a salve for their self-esteem. They dress to catch second glances. This is often done without regard for the potential harm to their already-fractured marriage.

*"Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised." **Proverbs 31:30***

I sense God has a reason for our revealing one more family secret. My prayer is that you will not take this counsel to be judgmental of either male or female standers. As with so much of what Charlyne and I do, when God shows any area to us that will help save marriages, we will proclaim that thought. My friend, let's be cautious how we attract looks (and where we look) so that marriages might be saved and restored, to the glory of God.

*"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." **Ephesians 4:1***

**Making no more stops at Golden Pond,
Bob Steinkamp, Returned Prodigal
Rejoice Marriage Ministries, Inc.
Post Office Box 10548
Pompano Beach, FL 33061 USA
<http://rejoiceministries.org> (Ministry web site)**

<http://rejoiceministries.org/r.php?num=tizwl> (Bookstore)

<http://rejoiceministries.org/r.php?num=1qrwh> (24/7 Radio)

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P.S. - There is another application to the Golden Pond story that is too obvious to be overlooked. Did those two men, subtly joking about a woman's cleavage, realize the kid next to them, barely tall enough to see over the counter, would take with him for life what he had observed from them?

My friend, those little emotional and spiritual sponges we call kids are silently soaking up everything we do, both right and wrong. You could do one small thing today that your child will remember when they are Social Security age. Even in the midst of serious family problems may they learn by example that Jesus is always the answer, and that He must be first. - RES

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Rejoice Marriage Ministries, Inc.
Post Office Box 10548
Pompano Beach, FL 33061
<http://rejoiceministries.org>