

# Relationships With Trainees' Wives

**ARE YOU HAVING A MENTORING MINISTRY. ARE YOU PERHAPS TRAINING TEAM MEMBERS. ARE YOU HOLDING SEMINARS. IF SO, REMEMBER GOD'S FAMILY PRIORITIES.**

## INTRODUCTION

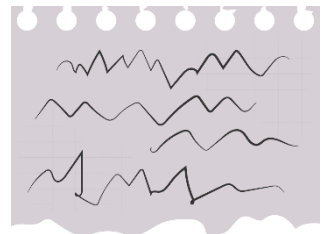
Wives should become partners in ministry with their husbands. Therefore, one of the key things for a mentoring ministry is to develop good relationships with students' wives. Think about it. A person doesn't live by himself. He belongs to someone. He has surroundings, his own culture or lifestyle, different needs. God has made us to thrive in an environment of relationships. A big temptation for many Christian leaders is to focus on a task, to focus on what we want a person to do or to learn, rather than to focus on making him successful. In the same way most coaches do not look beyond the student to the student's wife and his family. Yet for spiritual leaders, temptations inevitably come through the family with the children, or the wife being attacked. In this lecture we want to give you a broader viewpoint looking beyond the lesson and beyond the student and seeing the package that he belongs to. If he is unhappy, he is going to have difficulties. If his wife is happy, if she is encouraging him in his studies or in his Christian ministry, he is much more likely to be successful. The focus of this lecture is-- how we can involve the wives and help **them** to feel an active part of their husbands' studies.

## I. HEALTHY COMMUNICATION

Communication is crucial and it's one of the biggest problems that every organization faces. Here are twelve little ideas of ways to effectively communicate:

### A. Using notes

A note is just one little paragraph on a piece of paper. That's a note. It's not a letter. It only takes a few moments to keep some communication going with your students' families. You can even ask your students to do it for each other. "Would you like to send a note to his family?" Maybe you finish a lesson fifteen minutes early, and you take just fifteen minutes to do that. Maybe a student comes earlier, and you say, "You know I think brother 'so and so' is really discouraged. I think life is difficult for his wife and children. Would you be willing to help me right now and write a little note of love and encouragement to this family? In about twenty minutes others will come, and we will begin but it would be wonderful if you would take a few minutes right now to do that."



### B. Using the phone

Phone frequently. You can pray over the phone. How many of you have prayed over the telephone with another person?

### C. Using congratulation slips

After an exam it would be very good if you had a little memo to send home to the wife, "Dear Maria, we did exams today and I am excited to tell you that your husband received a four in the closing exam. He couldn't have done it without you. I love you and your family and am praying for you." Wouldn't that be beautiful? How would your wife feel if she got such a note from your coach? I don't imagine many of you have gotten

such a note from your coach yet. We need to change that. Make a point to do it. These notes are called “congratulation slips.”

#### **D. Homework slips**

Sometimes there is a lot of homework, and it gets a bit confusing. Sometimes you will not meet for a long time because of Christmas or Easter or something else and you say, “Dear Maria, thank you for backing up your husband. Your husband has a lot of work over the next two weeks. He needs to prepare a sermon; he needs to do an extra lesson because he was sick; I am especially asking for your assistance. Please, help him to find extra time. Help him to find nice quiet time so he can reach his goals. Please pray for him and pray for myself. Thank you.” You may send this only once a year to three families for instance. It’s not a regular thing. You may even spell out the assignments so she can ask him how he is coming along with it.

#### **E. Using bulletins**

A Good Trainer puts out a little bulletin once a quarter telling about what is happening in other groups or about people being saved, guests coming, and so on. It is good to share with your students’ families. Make some extra photocopies. Learn to use some local ministry money for these “little extras.” The Bible suggests that we tithe to the church and then give extras on top of that. Even when you tithe to the church you still have this beautiful opportunity to give something sacrificially to your students’ families.

#### **F. Writing letters**

Before the end of the school year it is good to send a letter out with a little overview of that year. Include all the lessons that were studied, the successes achieved, the news of when you will begin again, with a request, “Please, mark this on your calendar,” along with the title of the new lesson series. Always include prayer requests.



#### **G. Having conferences for wives**

We recommend that you have a conference for wives at least once a year. Twice is even better, once in fall and spring. You may not want to have one big conference in the province where everybody has lots of expenses with travel and it costs a lot for food and lodging, but maybe just a local conference. Eight wives getting together with your wife doing some special lectures. Each of the wives can bring one small food dish and there is enough. It doesn’t cost anything. If the wives are not working, it could be done during the daytime while the children are in school. If that’s not possible, ask them to leave work a little bit earlier and start at five o’clock. If you can, the best of all is to sleep together overnight. That’s the best thing. I don’t know what happens. I don’t understand it but after people change into their night wear they begin to relax, they become friendly, they become open to listen, to pray together and bond together.

#### **H. Having Training celebration nights and programs for wives**

At the end of the lesson series you might have the men do a little role playing or have them do a little Biblical drama or have one of the students preach very shortly on a section of the lesson and invite the wives to come. Make it part of your celebration. Plan it for either on the evening when the lesson would usually be held, or on a Friday evening or all-day Saturday.

#### **I. Have an awards banquet**

At the end of the year, it is excellent to have the students get together and pass out the certificates and have a real nice meal together. Nice meals are not always very expensive. Things can be made inexpensively, but if the food tastes good and everything is clean and attractive, everyone can enjoy it. Create a special atmosphere with good upbeat modern music and some special discipleship decorations. After this ceremony local pastors should be encouraged to have a special Sunday service for these students with their wives. There should be prayer on their knees on the platform, a summary of what they have been

studying, and maybe a brief testimony from one of the students of how God has worked in his life through these lessons . Also have the choir sing a special number and possibly preach on the topic “Making other people successful.”

## **J. Make home visits**

It is an absolute must for any coach to visit the majority of his students once a year. Now, he cannot do that but there are two categories that he can visit: new students and the students that are suffering because of poverty, because of illness, because of special problems that have happened.

## **K. Emphasizing wives**

You can do this almost every time you have a seminar. You can ask students how their wives are. If there is a problem, you can follow up with that. You can bring a little gift for their wives. Maybe they have not revealed a need, but a cabbage or flower would be thoughtful. You can ask the students to pray for each other’s wives, just generally, or to pray for a particular need of a wife or family. It depends on you, the leader. The opportunity is right before you and it doesn’t take any extra time or effort.

## **L. Nipping problems in the bud**

All problems have a beginning. If you sense that a wife isn’t happy about her husband studying, you need to find out what the problem is. You need to pray with the husband about the situation. Perhaps you need to go and talk with the wife, or your wife needs to call and talk to her and draw her out. Don’t ignore warning signs. Nipping problems in the bud means to take care of them when they are still small. Once a problem is “in full bloom” you probably cannot reverse it.

# **II. CONSIDER THE WIFE’S POSITION**

We have been talking about nurturing this relationship with the wives. Nurturing is something like a medical nurse does. It’s a little bit like nurturing a patient. You need to take into consideration who these women are and what their situation is. Again, I am going to give several points here for you to think about:

## **A. Finances**

There are many men who say, “Ah, household money that’s no problem. God will bless.” But the wife goes to the store and the storekeeper says, “Please, give me the money.” She prays, “God, please give me.” In most cases the wife is responsible for the family finances. She buys the bread. Okay, the child goes and gets it, but she gives the money to the child. Finances are often a bigger concern to the wife than to the student himself. So, keep the wives informed.

## **B. Time**

If she has three pre-school children and a broken washing machine a wife is going to be busy. If she has other women helping her then she is not busy, but she has no free moment to herself at all. Maybe there is something you could do about this situation. Think of practical suggestions you can make to families. Maybe for a couple grievna per day one of the neighbor girls is willing come and help every day for an hour and let the mother take a nap in the afternoon when the children sleep. Make sure that the student maintains regular family times. Sometimes busyness feels good to a man, but his wife needs the relationship and priority in his time schedule. Make sure that he spends at least a half an hour a day just talking to and **mostly** listening to his wife.

## **C. Emotions**

Men maybe have fewer emotions or maybe they just have more anger. But women are full of emotions. Sometimes women don't know why they have emotions. A lot of it has to do with their cycle of production, the hormones, and the chemical imbalances in their system, but it's a fact. What can you do about it? Make sure you don't overreact when a wife calls you and is upset. When a student comes and is upset because of his wife, "A soft answer turns away wrath." That Biblical approach will definitely be appropriate. Most women need a listening ear and time for their "tempest in a teacup" to blow over.

## **D. Education**

He is the student, but she is maybe a little bit more intelligent and when she was young, she had a dream to study. Maybe she was even in a program, and then this wonderful man on a white horse came into her life and she stopped her study program. Now, he is studying and growing, and she has rough, chapped hands from washing the laundry by hand and she does not feel really good about herself. She is not against it but deep down inside she wishes that she could be the one to study. Encourage her to get involved in the women's training. Everybody wants to grow and learn some new things. To also be studying may fill a real need for her.

## **E. Background**

Where does she come from? Does she come from an unbelieving family, or does she have three brothers who are pastors and elders? Perhaps her father is a pastor? These things make a very big difference. If she comes from that background she would understand that the man called of God works harder than any other man and gets less money. But if she does not have that background, she is going to need some extra encouragement. She may need help with building spiritual priorities in her life.

## **F. Understanding**

What does she really know about the training ministry? What does she really know about why her husband is studying or what he wants to accomplish?

## **G. Ability**

Maybe she has real talents and abilities that she wants to use, and she can't. There is no opportunity. How can you help her find new possibilities?

## **H. Vision**

Maybe her vision is to have more children and to stay in this home and for her husband to have four cows and two horses. Or maybe her vision is for him to be a local deacon, but she is afraid that he is going to study and then they will have to move to another place. Does she understand her husband's vision? Is he taking her along with him?

## **I. All in a spirit of meekness**

Discipleship leaders are to be servants. You think that a student should obey his teacher and do what his teacher wants him to do. But Jesus was the greatest teacher that the world has ever known, and at the same time He was known for His meekness. He didn't boss people around and push His will on other people. His spirit was one of power totally under control. He was always available to serve and minister to the people as He taught them. Seek His example in your relationship with both the students and their wives.

### III. MAKE WIVES A PART OF THE TRAINING MINISTRY

Build a team spirit that the wife feels part of.

#### A. Develop the “our” Discipleship Ministry spirit

Help them begin to use these words, “Our Training Ministry . Our Discipleship program. Our Mentoring Lessons .” It means ownership. They are not on the outside. They are part of the whole team.

#### B. Involve wives in meaningful projects

For instance:

##### 1. *Regular giving*

Maybe she wants to work to earn some extra money. Maybe she is the one to save the money and get it ready for her husband. Maybe there are some other things that she can give. Perhaps she can share tea or cookies or garden produce.

##### 2. *Assisting with the recordkeeping*

Wives can be an untapped resource that would give a valuable service to you and help them be part of the whole team. Some people thrive on details and love helping in an area like this.

##### 3. *Women’s classes*

Perhaps she would like to help organize them. Maybe she just wants to be a student. Maybe she has gifts for leading other ladies.

##### 4. *Cooking*

When you are going to have a conference, she can help for a couple of days.

##### 5. *Sewing*

Possibly some curtains need to be sewn for the office or maybe a student or a coach has moved, and they need a few things sewn for their new place.

##### 6. *Art*

Maybe she would like to make a decoration for the office. Maybe she could do some of the artistic work for your brochure. Coaches should learn to frequently use posters for their seminars. Making specific posters for various lessons is a great project.

##### 7. *Music*

Again, that can be used at a conference. Maybe she just can locally get together with one or two other ladies to plan some musical numbers. This is a good way for her to draw in wives of potential students.

##### 8. *Typing*

There may be materials to type out. There are some particular home church or Training ministry projects. Maybe notes for her husband and some of the other students.

##### 9. *Foreign language*

Maybe be she can translate into Ukrainian, or English into another language..

##### 10. *Field trip preparations*

We recommend that you have group outings. Twice a year is excellent. Perhaps after you have done about three weeks of work i you could go and see a monastery or museum. Or just to go to a park and play some soccer and have a picnic. She can help with those preparations.

##### 11. *Work-days*

Clean up days. Once a year the office needs a thorough cleaning. Maybe books need to be sorted out in the warehouse. She can come for a day and help.

## **IV.KEEP THE COMMUNICATIONS CONTINUALLY UP-TO-DATE**

### **A. Keep wives current in financial obligations**

There are certain fees that the student needs to pay, like buying his books or other expenses that you may have. It is extremely important that you inform the student **AND** his wife at the beginning of the lesson series exactly what costs are involved. The wife needs to be involved in that commitment so that it does not cause dissension in the family.

### **B. Develop gratitude and a joyful contributing spirit in everything**

People need to be told about the joy of giving, about the joy of sacrifice, about the joy of service, about how pleasing it is to Jesus. The normal worldly standard is selfishness, "Let people serve me." We are trying to raise up Christian leaders with Christian wives and families. The success of that revolves around how much the student and his wife learn to enjoy doing things for other people.

### **C. Remind them that in the Training Ministry the spiritual is number one**

Not academics or exams, or just doing a church job. There is a difference between training and teaching. We are not teaching; we are **training** for spiritual ministry. The only way to have a spiritual ministry is to have a good attitude, a good spirit, to be sold out to the Lord.

### **D. Work with the wives to increase their husbands' motivation**

Wives have a great influence over their husbands. The attitude of the wives makes a huge difference in the family. She can help keep him on target. "Are you going to study tonight? I have everything all prepared. I bought a new light bulb for your lamp and it's ready for you. I told the children we would be eating early. I promised them that later on we would go out and have some ice cream. They are all excited about that and you can have the whole evening free to do your lesson ." This is how a wife who is behind her husband can motivate him.

## **V. REMEMBER THAT:**

### **A. Wives are wonderful**

Don't begin to think negatively about wives. It's God's plan for us to be married, to have children, to raise Christian sons and daughters who will be serving Jesus in the next generation. Think of wives as wonderful. I expect you think of your own wife as wonderful; the others are just as precious, and I hope you will treasure them and think of them as wonderful also.

### **B. You are the key to the relationship**

Wives may occasionally contact you, but the responsibility is yours not theirs. If you do not include the wives, if you don't talk to the men about their wives, if you don't pray for these wives, then there will be no relationship, and you will have lost a real resource towards having a successful training

### **C. Consider well what you say and do**

You want to draw these wives in and help them feel a part of the whole team. But if you don't approach it right, they will think you just want to dump a lot of work on them. They will feel that you are laying the whole

responsibility for their husbands' performance on them. Through misunderstanding wives might become domineering and want to take over in the training ministry operations. Consider well what you say and make sure you are really communicating and building.

#### **D. Husbands belong to their wives**

You may give them as much homework as you want. You may want to send them out to do a spiritual ministry as much as you want, but he belongs to his wife. Make sure that your student doesn't lose his priority of marriage. It is God-ordained. They belong together and they need to be together.

#### **E. Be honest**

Don't say the student is doing great when he is just barely getting by. Be honest in your statements. Don't be afraid to admit it when you have not done your job properly or have made a mistake. Humility touches people's hearts. Hypocrisy hardens people's hearts. Keep your heart pure before God.

#### **F. Terminate students prayerfully and tenderly**

Sometimes you just need to drop a student. That's not the best, that's not easy, that should not happen very quickly. But if a student is not doing the work, or is not involved in spiritual ministry, he cannot continue. Talk to him tenderly with loving concern. Go back to him a month later; show your face in the family. Bring a little gift, ask how things are going. Ask them if there are any needs they have or, if you notice a need, arrange for someone to help them in some way. Just because he cannot study any longer doesn't mean you have to reject him and his wife.

#### **G. Remember you are a servant**

You are a coach; you are not a teacher. You are there to make the students successful. You are there to train them, to disciple them. You are there to pour your life into theirs.

#### **H. Pray for and care about their wives also**

Don't forget that your student represents a family. He is not an island.

#### **I. Your work is a team effort**

The wife is a part of the team. Teach the students to make their wives part of the team. Teamwork builds a ministry. An uninvolved wife can become jealous and begin pulling in a different direction. A ministry and a Godly man could be destroyed before he even gets started. Develop the vision of unity, one team--not two people, doing things together, serving God and men in a lifetime ministry.

### **CONCLUSION**

I hope that this lecture has helped you see that discipleship training relationships with student wives are crucial. As a coach you must constantly look beyond the classroom, beyond the student to his wife and family, beyond the student to his spiritual ministry, beyond his academics to his spiritual success. That's your God-given task. Praise God!

Amen.

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

## *Practical assignment*

Completed

- Using at least three different methods of communication contact several of your students' wives to encourage them. Write a brief report ☐
- Make a list of the practical projects that you can get the wives involved in with your training ministry . Get at least one wife (other than your own) involved. Write a short report on the project and who and how you got the wives involved. ☐