

It started with a whimper (a servant leader is born).

Dalrock | 3 March, 2018 | by Dalrock

Bdash77 pointed me* to the book [Every Man's Marriage, an Every Man's Guide to Winning the heart of a woman](#). This is the follow up book to the wildly popular [Every Man's Battle](#), and is by the same authors (Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker). Given how influential Arterburn and Stoker are in evangelical circles, when I found a used copy of Every Man's Marriage I bought it. I haven't read the entire book yet, but I've read enough to know the message of the book. As the title explains, the book is about teaching husbands to win their wives' hearts. How does the book explain a Christian husband should go about winning his wife's heart? By submitting to her. This is a modern Christian staple and is an [expression of theological crossdressing](#).

In the very beginning of the book we learn how both men began their journey to understanding the importance of submitting to their wives. Arterburn wrote the introduction, titled *Have you found the keys to her heart?* In the introduction he describes how he came to marry his current (at the time) wife:

I rushed the relationship because I was acting out of fear that I would go through life unmarried, unloved, and an outcast in the Christian community. I only divulged the existence of my first marriage and subsequent divorce when I thought Sandy could handle the news, but I never let on regarding the desperation I felt to marry again. Sandy was a “catch”—bright, attractive, talented, and gracious—and I didn't want to mess up this courtship. I would hide who I really was.

Despite his sickening neediness, he tells us he had it all backwards and thought that wives should submit to their husbands and win them over without a word:

But was I so different from most other men? Rather than connect with women and understand them, most men seem to want to command them. Many husbands use 1 Peter 3 as their official standard, for it instructs women married to non believers to keep silent and win their husbands over with loving words and actions. This Scripture passage has given many men free rein in their behavior of leaders, often shattering marital oneness and intimacy to smithereens.

I know of these things because I became one of the worst offenders after I married my first wife...

The introduction is confusing because Arterburn switches fluidly between discussing his first and second wives (he had not yet met his now third wife when he and Stoeker wrote the book**). However, the important part is that it took two [wakeup calls](#) before he decided to radically redefine headship and submission. The first wakeup call came when his first wife divorced him:

Amazingly, I thought everything was going well until the day she said she was leaving me. Rather than humble myself to ask what I had done to be hurtful, I pulled out the Bible to prove to her that it was not right for her to go. I just knew this “scriptural club” would knock some sense into her. I preached Ephesians 5 at her so often that I had it memorized. In my narrow view, this passage said that she should submit to me and that God was going to be very upset with her if she did not get in line with what He wanted for His boy Steve. But my arrogant reaction to her announcement simply proved that she was right. I was an insensitive, egotistical, self-obsessed, uncaring jerk of a husband who had no idea how to win the heart of a woman.

| She left my house for the courthouse and filed for divorce.

He tells us he hadn't changed when he married his second wife (Sandy), and says that as a result his second marriage was also "dying". Finally after going to counseling he learned that he had to win Sandy's heart:

| I limited my travel to two days per week. I came home from work by 6:00 PM. and left my briefcase at the office so I wouldn't work at home. I regularly called Sandy to ask her to join me for lunch. Most of all, I decided to meet her needs by lavishing thoughtful gifts and getaway weekends on her— and by taking the trash out without being asked and making sure my dirty laundry actually reached the clothes hamper and then by learning how to operate the washing machine.

| These seemingly small but dramatic changes revived my dying marriage. Our relationship improved when we brought our daughter, Madeline, home from the hospital in 1990.

But as Arterburn explains in the introduction, the book focuses on the wakeup call Stoeker received from his wife Brenda. Chapter 1 is titled *In the Beginning: A Painful Revelation*, and opens with:

| I sat across the kitchen table from my wife, Brenda, and I could tell she was waiting until she had my undivided attention.

| Then she looked intently into my eyes and changed my world. "I don't know how else to say this to you, so I'll say it straight," she began. "My feelings for you are dead."

*It turns out that reader Bee had actually pointed to the same book [two years ago](#), but it escaped my attention at the time.

**According to his [bio at Family Life](#), Arterburn started dating his third wife (Misty) in 2003. This suggests that something went terribly wrong almost immediately after the publication of the book in October of 2001.

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