

Marital Discipline by No One

For a wife to be spanked is more intensely personal than copulation. Since most women do not want to be subject of gossip, they tend to be careful in whom they confide potentially embarrassing intimate details of their lives at a time when spanking is more controversial than in past generations.

To further complicate matters for a Christian community divided on the issue, the Bible is silent on the issue of *wife spanking*. As I wrote some time ago, "It ain't in the Bible"; Yet, as I pointed out, biblical silence is not condemnation. Moreover, there is implied sanction within scripture.

A few years ago, I stumbled onto a single message left by a Christian widow on a now defunct traditional marriage bulletin board. Apparently responding to the concerns of a recently spanked young wife - the widow offered straightforward advice of the variety that mothers used to give daughters and grandmothers used to give granddaughters before political correctness and experts turned marriages into social engineering disasters. One of the things the widow stated unequivocally was that to hit a woman anywhere other than on her bottom was unacceptable. On the other hand, she made no bones about husbands spanking disobedient and unruly wives - especially if they have been previously warned.

The widow's advice is based on the biblical concept of submission of wives as described by Paul in Ephesians 5:22-24. In return, wives should reasonably expect husbands to fulfill the *love* requirement in verse 25 - which, by definition is violated in truly abusive relationships. Although there may be rare exceptions - such as the wife of a visiting evangelist several years ago admonishing some of the more timid husbands in a congregation to take their belts off and thrash their gossiping wives - more personal discussions of marital discipline are often the province of older women. (The evangelist's wife prefaced her statements by observing that they would be more believable coming from her - as a wife subject to her husband - than from her husband.) Having experienced the continuum of life - from childhood through marriage and children, and onto grandparenting - often provides older women with a perspective denied younger generations. Older women are also usually less conflicted about spanking than are younger women still struggling with residual influence from that common adolescent belief that *big girls* are "too old for a spanking". Naive wives often feel they are the *only one* whose husbands find it necessary to paddle, strap, or switch their bare behinds from time to time. The reality is that, although details may differ, husbands do things very much alike and wives react in an equally predictable fashion.

Moreover, *wife spanking* has probably been going on since shortly after God expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden. It is implied in the last portion of Genesis 3:16 - which, after addressing the difficulties of childbirth, says: "thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee"; After forty years of marriage, my take on the spanking question is that it is less about *obedience* than improving the relationship - of which *obedience* maybe a component. There are simply those times when what needs to be said is beyond the capacity of verbal expression to communicate.

It is no accident that, in the English language, "spanking" has four common definitions - only one of which mentions the buttocks. Nor - although American divorce rates have historically been higher than those of Europe, perhaps owing to the type of woman likely to emigrate from Europe to America - is it coincidental that divorce rates spiraled as spanking declined.