

stop
Laughing
I'm trying to make a point

Kim Peckham

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Dedicated to

Lori Peckham and the Brooks shoe company

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depends on a loving spouse and comfortable shoes.

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SECTION 1:

The Rib IS All We Have in common

Take Control of Your Life (or at Least Your Hair)

Admit it. You want to be in control. It's human nature. The struggle for control is the theme of every history book. First one person exercises control. Then—through violence or wicked scheming—another individual seizes control. This is especially true when it comes to the office thermostat.

Men, perhaps more than women, feel that everybody would be better off if they were put in charge. There isn't a guy alive who doesn't secretly believe that if he were made president for at least a week, he could straighten out all the nation's problems. Of course, this will be the same guy who has to ask his wife where he left his car keys.

Women, on the other hand, don't fantasize about controlling the destiny of 300 million Americans. They just want to control their hair. If a woman did become president, she would establish the National Institute of Hair and spend billions researching a hair spray that could hold every strand in place during a walk from the parking lot to the church lobby on a windy day. If she succeeded, a grateful nation would definitely put her face on a coin.

Women are also much more interested than men in controlling germs. It is an actual fact that a woman politician championed the law that says every public restroom in California must have disposable toilet seat covers.

Men have granted women dominion over hair and germs, but they would like to think they're in control of everything else. Everything, that is, except crabgrass, the stock market, what time the appliance repairman will show up, what the kids watch on TV, mosquitoes, medical costs, whether or not the computer will print, and the amount the car salesperson will give him on trade-in.

The truth is that guys don't get to control much of anything. Even a man with employees—who in theory must respond to his every wish—will find that in actual practice these employees regard his instructions with disdain and resentment because they are busy trying to auction office supplies on eBay.

STOP LAUGHING—I'M TRYING TO MAKE A POINT

Fortunately, God in His infinite compassion has given men two ways to feel in control. The first is the steering wheel. I'm not going to say anything more about a man's love for things with steering wheels except to say that if your sewing machine came equipped with one, you couldn't *stop* your husband from making new drapes for the living room.

The second is the TV remote. When I seize the remote, I become the supreme ruler of TV land. I can choose any programming I want. Notice how I can instantly flip from this advertisement for pickup trucks to this other channel, where, ah, they are advertising a sale on pickups, to this other channel, where they are also featuring an ad for some really tough pickup trucks.

Anyway, I'm holding tight to the remote. If I can control nothing else in this world, I can rule over those people who are flickering across the screen.

From history's point of view, the struggle for control continues. Yet I don't think heaven intends for it to be a struggle. Rather, it should be a great dance, where sometimes we lead by taking control of a situation, and sometimes we bow in submission as another takes the lead.

When we are at our best, we are like loyal princes and princesses, happy to give orders and happy to take orders, as long as it happens under the rule of our heavenly King.

It Is Not Good That Man Should Eat Alone

Men don't eat well without supervision. Take my friend Chuck as an example. He's an intelligent, capable guy in every regard. Except that he has no clue how to feed himself.

If his wife goes anywhere, she has to leave him a bag of chips with detailed serving instructions. The refrigerator can be full—and he would still starve. It's like leaving a terrier alone with a case of Alpo and an electric can opener.

Oh, I admit that some of us can cook. But when we're alone, we get lazy. Before marriage, I never made salads because I couldn't face the grueling job of ripping lettuce leaves into bite-size pieces. Even peeling back the aluminum foil on a TV dinner seemed like too much effort. This is embarrassing to talk about, but once I tried to heat beans on a stove burner without taking them out of their original can. Now, that's lazy.

What guys need is a food that will climb up on the table under its own power, cover itself with gravy, and send an emergency broadcast over the TV that supper is served. Until then, most of us will just have to make due with breakfast cereal.

Let me just say that while I respect the men's ministry movement in the Christian church, no ministry to males can match the service provided by W. K. Kellogg when he invented cornflakes. The one recipe that every guy can remember is "Dump cereal in bowl. Add milk." As long as we don't need our wife to tell us where the spoons are, we're set.

My friend Richard is happy to eat cereal for breakfast, lunch, or supper if his wife isn't around. He passes on this helpful advice to other guys out there: "If you run out of cereal, just break up bread in your bowl and proceed as usual."

Men's efforts in the kitchen are handicapped by a lack of interest. We spend about as much time thinking about cooking as we worry over the colorfastness of rayon. That's because we have bigger concerns on our minds, such as how to get the song from *Star Trek* to play when we start up our computer.

STOP LAUGHING—I'M TRYING TO MAKE A POINT

Sadly, we don't even care about the healthfulness of food. Show a guy the new food pyramid chart and he'll say, "Hey, what's that? Looks like a big Dorito."

It's usually the women in our lives who encourage us to cut the fat, the cholesterol, and the sugar. Then the minute we men are out of town, they take off with their girlfriends to The Cheesecake Factory.

Which brings me to my next point. Women don't eat that well without supervision either. I admit that an all-girl outing at a restaurant usually gets off to a good start. Small salads will be ordered. The entree is usually no more than a baked potato.

Then the waiter brings out the dessert tray, and it's like something snaps. The same woman who insisted on low-fat salad dressing (on the side) is suddenly ordering a dessert carved out of a solid block of chocolate. Some of these desserts are so rich that they come with a coupon for \$10 off on your next angioplasty.

I'm not judging this behavior as good or evil. The great controversy involves bigger issues than a slice of pecan pie. I'm just saying that we all seem to be better off when we have each other. Good company prevents the excesses that we might be prone to otherwise.

Maybe God was thinking along these lines when He gave us the church. Fellowship with wise and seasoned saints can keep us balanced—in more ways than just diet. Their influence can prevent us from binging on strange doctrines or unholy behavior. Because, whether or not we want to admit it, we all need a little supervision.

High-Mileage Relationships

In homes across this great country of ours, men are puzzling over the question: Why do women collect so many pairs of shoes? It's hard for guys to understand because we need only one pair with shoelaces and one without.

Well, the reason women buy so many shoes—as far as I can understand—is that shoes are for sale. The day that a woman can pass a display of shoes without picking one up is the day that I can walk by a box of warm Krispy Kreme donuts.

Now, in the interest of fair play, we will take a question from a woman in our audience. Yes, you in the teal suede pumps with eelskin detail. State your question.

“What’s the deal with men and cars?”

Good question. Cars illustrate one difference between a man’s relationships and a woman’s. Women generally feel that if they are going to invest time and energy in a relationship, it should involve an actual human being. Men are not so picky.

We look at a car and say, “It’s bright and shiny. It lets me be in total control *and* it doesn’t talk much. This could be the start of something beautiful.”

As time passes, we can become downright sentimental about our set of wheels. Burly men who jackhammer rocks for a living will dab at their eyes as they remember their first automobile.

My pastor admits to being so attached to a beat-up Toyota that he continued to drive it even when the only way into the car was through the hatchback. I’ve heard of men demanding to be buried in their cars, though a fellow will feel mighty silly when he wakes up on the resurrection day in a ’76 Eldorado with a dead battery.

Men will shower a great deal of attention on cars. You should see the effort my cousin Dave puts into hand-waxing his van—a vehicle with nearly as much sheet metal as a grain barn.