

# FamilyLife Today<sup>®</sup> Radio Transcript

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## Being His Helper

Guest: Barbara Rainey  
From the series: Letters to My Daughters (Day 3 of 3)  
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**Bob:** The Bible calls women to be helpers to their husbands; but as Barbara Rainey points out—sometimes, when you’re trying to help, you’re not helping.

**Barbara:** I think, in most women’s hearts, we do start out—in the early years, especially—genuinely wanting to help. It switches somewhere, along the line—to becoming a control issue, to becoming a management issue, to becoming a critical issue—where I am being his *mother* and not his helper. I’m being his parent and not his partner.

I think that is the lesson—it’s that we, as women / we, as wives, need to be aware and to recognize when it does and to say: “Oh yeah! I need to be his friend. We’re peers, we’re equals, we’re teammates; and we can work this out together,” rather than it—letting it become this great obstacle.

**Bob:** This is *FamilyLife Today*. Our host is the President of FamilyLife<sup>®</sup>, Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. How can a wife be a helper to her husband?

**1:00**

We’re going to explore that today with Barbara Rainey. Stay tuned.

And welcome to *FamilyLife Today*. Thanks for joining us. I had somebody share something with me a long time ago. I always thought this was interesting—they were talking about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our life. They were saying that the word for the Holy Spirit in the Bible is the word, *Paraclete*.

**Dennis:** Right.

**Bob:** What they said was: “There’s a difference between a *paraclete* and a parasite. A parasite is something that attaches itself to you and just sucks the life out of you.”

**Dennis:** Right.

**Bob:** “A *paraclete* is something that attaches itself to you and pours life into you.” I mean, that’s always stuck with me. I’ve thought, “That’s not only true of our relationship

with the Holy Spirit—He does attach Himself to us and pours life into us—but *all* of our relationships tend to be parasite or *paraclete* relationships”; don’t you think?

**Dennis:** They do. It’s interesting—

**2:00**

—that in the Scripture, God refers to Himself as our Helper. I think the Holy Spirit is our Helper.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Dennis:** He comforts us / He gives us the power to live the Christian life.

**Bob:** Jesus said, “I will send another Helper,”—indicating that He had been the Helper. So Helper really—God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit—are all identified as “Helper.”

**Dennis:** That’s right; but if you go all the way back to the beginning of the Bible, the first use of the word, “helper,” is not referring to God but referring to the woman that God made for man.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Dennis:** I know, for Barbara, who joins us again on *FamilyLife Today*—Barbara, welcome back.

**Barbara:** Thank you.

**Dennis:** She’s written a book that is—was first written for our daughters, as they married, and our daughters-in-law as they married our sons. One of the first sections of the book talks about the role of being a helper. You believe that’s important; don’t you?

**Barbara:** I do. I think that we have come to think of helper in a more negative sense—more as a servant.

**3:00**

Yet, when you go back to the very beginning—as you were just talking about a minute ago—and realize that God used that term to describe the woman / to describe Eve when He made her. He called her helper *before* the whole thing broke down and fell apart in the Garden. It wasn’t Plan B—it wasn’t: “Oh, well; now, that you’ve made mistakes, and I’m kicking you out of the Garden, and you’re going to have to start living in a different place—*now*, you have to be the helper,”—it was helper from the very beginning.

If we really focus on that, and think about that, it means that I was made, as a female, to be a helper—I was built for that, I was fashioned for that, I was designed for that. It's not a second thought / it's not Plan B—it's not an afterthought. It's intuitive in who I am, as a female, to be helper in the same way that God is helper to us.

**Bob:** You say, in the book—when you got married, you say, “I was eager to begin being my husband's helper;

**4:00**

—but beyond cooking for him and doing our laundry, I honestly had no idea what the concept / the assignment really meant.”

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Bob:** I think there are a lot of women who, when they hear the term, “helper,”—they think, “What is it if it's not cooking, cleaning, and laundry?”

**Barbara:** Those things are a part of what each individual couple works out—who does the cooking / who does the laundry. All of that is a creative blend of the two that are in the marriage unit. And often—

**Bob:** Who does the cooking at your house? I'm just curious—

**Barbara:** Well, you know, right now, he does! [Laughter]

**Dennis:** But for the past 35 years, she did! [Laughter]

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Bob:** You've given—

**Dennis:** So I've got—I've got a long time—[Laughter]

**Barbara:** I delegated! [Laughter]

**Dennis:** —I've got a long time to catch up in this deal.

**Barbara:** Yes; yes. We have traded places on that one; but the point is—is that, oftentimes and through the centuries, most women have done those tasks in the marriage relationship. That isn't really what helper is all about. Helper is *far greater* than that—it's me completing my husband.

**5:00**

It's me—and who I am, and the way God made me, as a woman and as an individual—completing him, making him better than he is on his own or making him more complete / more fulfilled. It's me helping him, though the years, become all God intended for him to be. It's far more of a person-building / it's far more of a relationship-building concept than it is just tasks around the house, which is what we've relegated it to.

**Bob:** The phrase I used—the *paraclete*—to attach yourself to him and pour life into him.

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Bob:** There really is something that a wife can—she can pour life into her husband; can't she?

**Barbara:** Oh, absolutely. That's why I have written about it in this section—about the example that the Holy Spirit is to us because the Holy Spirit does give us life. I think, in ways that we, as women, don't realize—we give life to our husbands. I think the analogies between the two are great.

**Bob:** You're not saying your role is to be the Holy Spirit to your husband.

**6:00**

**Barbara:** No. [Laughter] I am not to be the Holy Spirit, and convict him of sin, any more than he is to be Jesus Christ for me. But we model—

**Bob:** But you can learn; yes.

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Barbara:** —he models and imitates what Christ did in His sacrifice—and I can model my helping and being a helper after what the Holy Spirit does for us.

**Dennis:** Before we talk about what it means to truly be the helper, one of the things you believe strongly that it's *not*—is it's *not* being your husband's mother.

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Dennis:** Explain what you mean by that.

**Barbara:** I think what happens is—when we women have children and we become, not just wife, but wife *and* mother—there are a lot of things that we do, as mother, that are helping tasks. We're constantly helping our children get dressed, we're helping learn to

tie their shoes, we help them learn to read, we help them with their homework, we help them get dressed, we help them in relationship issues when they've got friends and they've got problems in elementary school, junior high, and high school.

**7:00**

We are very much a helper with our children, but it's an authoritative kind of helper. I'm the one in charge, and my child is to follow me. What happens so often in marriage is—that we wives forget sometimes to switch from being helper as mother to being helper as wife—and they're very different. I'm not an authority with my husband / I'm not his teacher. For me to help him as if I am his teacher and he is to be my pupil—that's backwards / that's wrong. That's not the kind of relationship that I'm supposed to have with him as a helper.

**Bob:** And you're supposed to be able to switch gears on the fly on that kind of a deal?

**Barbara:** Yes, I think so; but that's where it gets tricky. [Laughter]

**Bob:** So what does it look like if it's not the kind of helper you would be with a kindergartener or a seventh grader? How is it different?

**Barbara:** It's different because I have a peer-relationship with my husband—we are equals. I am not a peer with my child—I'm an authority with my child. That's the fundamental difference.

**8:00**

For instance, Dennis and I had a conversation not too long ago. I don't know if you'll remember this—but we recently remodeled our living room. We got our couch recovered—because the kids are gone, we got it recovered in a very light color fabric, which I would have *never* done when we were raising kids. Now, that it's just the two of us—I thought we can do this—we can recover it in a fabric that's probably no real smart for kids but I think with the two of us we can handle this.

Not long after we had finished the remodeling, we had gotten the couch back from being reupholstered. We were eating, and Dennis wanted to eat in the living room. He plopped down on the couch—

**Bob:** I know where this is going. [Laughter]

**Barbara:** —with his plate.

**Bob:** Yes! [Laughter]

**Dennis:** Never happened at your place; has it Bob?

**Bob:** It wasn't spaghetti; was it? I hope it wasn't spaghetti.

**Barbara:** No, it wasn't spaghetti—I don't know what it was. As we sat there, I'm thinking: "This isn't going to work. This isn't what I had in mind. I don't think this is a really good place to be eating our dinner." We began—we had a conversation; and I said, "What would you think about always eating over there at the table?"

**9:00**

He said, "I really would like to eat and watch TV some." Anyway, the point is that we talked through: "Where would be an acceptable place for him to eat, in the living room, where he could watch TV—watch a football game on Saturday afternoon." We decided the couch is not where he would eat. He would eat over there in the chair—it's on a part of the carpet that doesn't stain as easily as the part in front of the couch does.

**Dennis:** Actually, what she encouraged me to do is run—

**Barbara:** So are you saying you don't remember it this way? [Laughter]

**Dennis:** —run an extension cord outside and eat it in a lawn chair in front of the TV in the yard. [Laughter]

**Barbara:** Where there is a hose! [Laughter]

**Bob:** You didn't put a bib on him or [Laughter] say, "You sit in this chair."

**Dennis:** We were just talking about being a mother; were we not?

**Barbara:** That's right; we were!

**Bob:** That's what—so this is an illustration of how you help your husband? [Laughter]

**Barbara:** Well, it's an illustration of how I—yes, how I help him [Laughter] eat like an adult—

**Dennis:** We worked it out.

**Barbara:** We did!

**Dennis:** We worked it out, and it is okay.

**10:00**

I do think the point is—if you listen carefully to the illustration Barbara gave, we had a discussion.

**Barbara:** —as peers. I wasn't telling you that you couldn't eat on the couch—I said: “Would you be willing to eat over there?” / “Could we work out a compromise?” was the gist of the conversation.

**Dennis:** What I'd want a man to hear in the midst of this is that he has a very important assignment—to respect his wife, and her opinion, and her values, and what she's about at that point—not just do what he wants to do. Philippians 2—we've quoted that many times, here on *FamilyLife Today*: “...not merely looking out for your own interests but for the interests of others.”

**Bob:** Yes.

**Dennis:** These little confrontations we're talking about here are a clash of values. They don't have to turn out and become where the wife ends up being the *mother* of the husband.

**Bob:** You tell about, how in your marriage—when you are travelling, back in the days before cell phones—

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Bob:** —you used to *mother* your husband in the airport?

**11:00**

**Barbara:** Yes. You know what's interesting about this dilemma for women is—I don't think we start out with that kind of an attitude. I think we genuinely/sincerely want to help. It just sort of evolves into a more parental attitude without even trying.

For instance, in the airport, when we used to travel before cell phones, Dennis would always want to make good use of his time. He'd walk across the area to another gate—wherever there happened to be a pay phone—and he would start making phone calls. I would sit in the waiting area and watch as every last passenger boarded the plane. They were about to close the door, and he was still on the phone.

Initially, I remember thinking: “He must not know that they're boarding the plane. He must have not been paying attention.” I would get up and go over, and motion at the gate, and motion at my watch. He'd go, “I know; I know.” He'd get off the phone, and we'd get on the plane. Then the next time I would do the same thing. After a while, I started to become irritated because I thought,

**12:00**

“I have to remind him all the time.”

**Dennis:** How many flights have we missed?

**Barbara:** Well, that’s the point! We *never* missed a flight because you were on the phone! [Laughter] But initially, I genuinely thought he didn’t know what time it was and that he didn’t—he was so engaged in the phone call that he didn’t realize they were boarding. I wanted to help so that we didn’t miss the flight. Over time, it became more of a parental attitude on my part.

**Dennis:** I was going to say—I was going to say that—parental.

**Barbara:** It really was because I thought: ‘What’s the deal? Why can’t he get off the phone, and we can board with everybody else?’ Then I started becoming critical.

So my point is—is that I think what we struggle with, as wives, is not necessarily starting out with a condescending attitude or a parental attitude. We really, genuinely want to help from our hearts; but it just sort of goes downhill sometimes.

**Bob:** As I read through this part of the book, I have to confess to you that I think one of the challenges that I think a lot of wives—

**13:00**

—a lot of women struggle with is the issue of control.

**Barbara:** Yes; definitely.

**Bob:** “I want to be in control of my environment. I feel safer if I’m in control of things.”

**Barbara:** No question; no question.

**Bob:** So this impulse to want to be a helper—sometimes is not, “I want to help my husband,”—it’s: “I want to manage my husband—

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Bob:** —“and control my husband because I feel more comfortable.” You’re waving and saying, “Everybody else is boarding,”—not because you’re trying to help him—but because you’re getting nervous, and you’d like to get on the plane.

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Bob:** And he needs to hurry up and get on there with you.

**Barbara:** No question.

**Bob:** It's not helping—it's controlling.

**Barbara:** And that's why I'm saying it's a difficult thing because I think, in most women's hearts, we do start out—in the early years, especially—genuinely wanting to help. It switches somewhere, along the line—to becoming a control issue, to becoming a management issue, to becoming a critical issue—where I am being his *mother* and not his helper. I'm being his parent and not his partner.

**14:00**

I think that is the lesson is that we, as women / we, as wives, need to be aware—that that shift happens—and to recognize when it does and to say: “Oh yeah; I'm being his mother, not his partner. “I need to be his friend—we're peers, we're equals, we're teammates—and we can work this out together rather than letting it become this great obstacle.

**Dennis:** So for wives—as they look at the subject of being a helper to their husbands—here's the question I would encourage every wife to ask her husband: “Sweetheart, how can I be a better, customized helper to you?” because I really believe, Bob, if we could somehow zoom back and look at an individual marriage through God's eyes—I believe He's made the husband and the wife for one another. He made them with differences—with unique strengths, and abilities, and weaknesses—

**15:00**

—so they need each other and so they complement each other. I think many couples can live a lifetime and never ever understand how the wife— specifically: “In what areas / how can she be a customized helper for her husband?” and then take good notes at what he says.

**Barbara:** Well, and that's what I—one of the points that I really am hoping will come across in this book to my daughters—I want them to see the beauty that God has made in marriage—that the way I help my husband is different than the way Mary Ann helps you, Bob—

**Bob:** Yes.

**Barbara:** —different than the way my daughters will help their husbands because my husband needs something different than you would need. That's the *wonderful* thing about marriage. God gave us very *few rules* for marriage—He gave us some guidelines to run on / some very specific things in Scripture—but He didn't give us a hundred

things to do in marriage. He gave us *very few*. Within that wonderful definition of marriage—

**16:00**

—that we get out of Scripture, there is endless ability to be creative because we are two unique people. God wants us to design a unique relationship between the two of us.

**Bob:** Okay; I've got two questions. The first is: "There are some wives who are hearing this and going, 'Well shouldn't this thing work both ways? I mean, why am I the helper? Shouldn't he be the helper to me too? Aren't we supposed to help one another?'" You're talking about teammates—so you're the helper, but he's the helper too; right?

**Barbara:** Yes; I think Dennis should answer that, but I think the real bottom line is—is that God has called men to serve. In that serving—of the husband serving the wife—that's how he helps. He's not given the title of helper, but he's given the title of servant-leader. That's how he would help his wife.

**Dennis:** Yes, I think Barbara mentioned the key term there—servant-leader. A husband is given the title, in Ephesians 5, "head,"—he is the authority. The buck does stop with him. He has responsibility to deny himself,

**17:00**

—to love his wife as Christ loved the church, and to be—as Barbara said—a servant-leader of her and meeting her needs.

I don't think a husband—in the sense of what we're talking about a wife being a helper—is to be his wife's helper. I think he's to be—the servant, the lover, the leader, the nourisher, the cherisher of her soul, and to look out for her best interest, and her horizons, and maximize her life—but he's got a different assignment—

**Bob:** Yes.

**Dennis:** —with her than she has with him.

**Bob:** Well, in fact, I was meeting with a group of guys recently. We were talking about this designation of servant-leader. We all kind of agreed that maybe it would be better to refer to husbands as shepherd-leaders than servant-leaders because the servant idea can—can almost make it sound like: "As long as your wife's happy, you're doing what you need to do." That's the trap I fell in, for years—was to think, 'As long as Mary Ann's happy—

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Bob:** —“then I’m—I’m being what God wants me to be.”

**18:00**

It’s not necessarily her momentary happiness that I should be focused on—

**Dennis:** No, it’s not.

**Bob:** —it’s the shepherding and leading of her—wisely, gently, carefully, feeding, guiding, caring for her.

**Dennis:** —protecting.

**Bob:** That’s right. So it was a—it was a helpful metaphor—

**Barbara:** Yes.

**Bob:** —to say: “A man should be a shepherd-leader and a wife should respond and should help in that process.”

My other question, though, for you is for the wife who would say: “If I went to my husband and said, ‘How would you like me to be your customized helper?’ he would say, ‘Get off my back and leave me alone! Just let me do what I want to do.’”

**Dennis:** But that’s not a good answer.

**Bob:** So does she tell him that?!

**Barbara:** Well, I think she frames the question a little differently. I think she says, in a particular situation—like, when Dennis and I were travelling, I could have said to him, “Is there anything I can do to help you so that we can get on our flight on time?” rather than some generic question that he might not be able to put words to. It’d be much better if she said, “How can I help you when we are...”

**19:00**

—or “...when this situation happens?” or “How can I encourage you when you’ve had a bad day at work?” If she will be specific, then she might get a more specific answer that would be easier for her to perhaps know what to do with.

**Bob:** But if he says, “Just leave me alone,” how does she respond to that?

**Barbara:** I think she needs to say: “What do you mean by leave you alone? What do you want me to back off on?” I think—if she really, genuinely wants to be a better

helper—then she needs to ask some follow-up questions / find out: “What does he mean by that?”

**Bob:** Yes.

**Dennis:** I think, over a lifetime together, this is a great question to interact about. In fact, we’d been married for 38 years before the thought ever occurred to me. I was talking to Barbara about her book—just to explore a little bit: “What have we learned in our marriage about how you are a great helper to me?” One of the areas she is—is she’s a wise counsellor.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Dennis:** She gives me the perspective that I most count on—

**20:00**

—for my life, from a human perspective. Now, I go to the Bible for my guidance and to guide in prayer; but she’s my closest friend—knows me well, looking out for my best interest in multiple ways. I go to her for her advice, her counsel, and her perspective. She is a *great*—

**Bob:** Yes.

**Dennis:** —helper in that area. I think, for a man, if he can just pull back and ask—if you’ve been married 10 years: “How is your wife a great helper to you? How do you see her having been designed by God to help you?”

Another way for Barbara is—and I told her this—she brings great beauty to my life. She’s an artist—she notices things *years* before I do. [Laughter] Then she points them out and I enjoy them. Because of her in my life—not only is she beautiful—but she brings beauty to my life and an appreciation for the aesthetics that God has created.

**21:00**

**Bob:** She keeps the sofa looking beautiful, too, by assigning you a place to sit. [Laughter]

**Barbara:** Now Bob, I didn’t *assign* now—

**Dennis:** —in the yard!

**Barbara:** —we agreed!

**Dennis:** —in the garage, with the hose! [Laughter]

**Bob:** *FamilyLife Today* is brought to you by FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas. And although FamilyLife is located in the United States of America, we have found that the issues facing families, issues like forgiveness and communication, taking care of our kids, all of the issues transcend national borders. Those issues profoundly affect marriages everywhere.

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Now we hope you can join us again tomorrow on *FamilyLife Today* as we'll continue to strengthen your marriage and your family one home at a time.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, and our global broadcast manager Michelle Hill. I also want to thank our editor Larry Loraine. For Dennis Rainey, I'm Bob Lepine inviting you to join us again tomorrow for another edition of *FamilyLife Today*.

FamilyLife: Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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