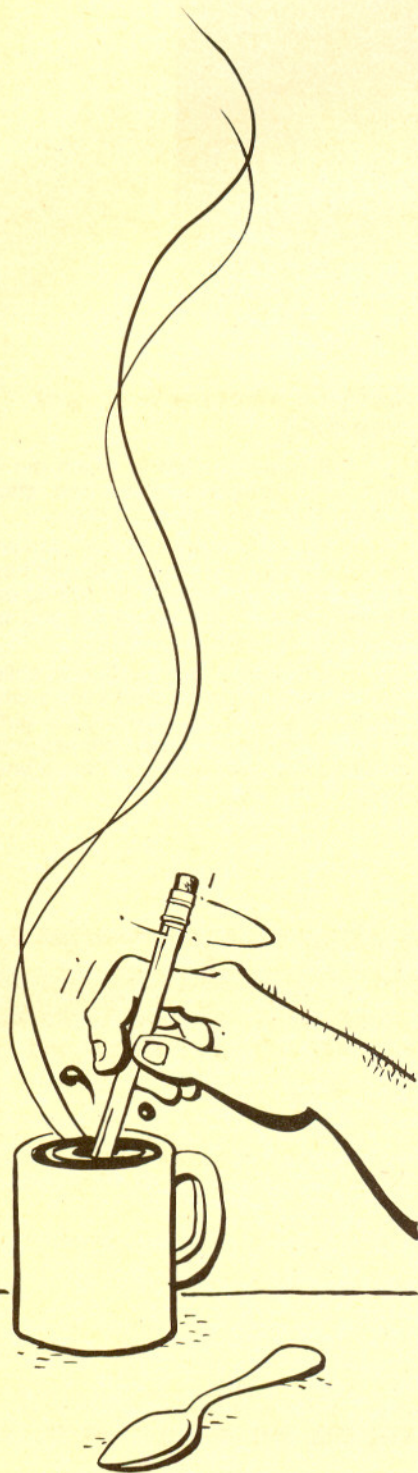


# The Last Word

JAMIE BUCKINGHAM



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Last Saturday morning we had a late breakfast. The children had scattered as they often do on a day off from school and I propped up in bed with a manuscript which needed final editing. Mid-morning, after cleaning up the bathroom, making the beds, and running the vacuum, Jackie went down and fixed eggs with cheddar cheese (my favorite), sausage, and grits. I put on a bathrobe and took my work down to the table.

I've been doing this for years—reading while I eat. It saves a great deal of time. In fact, I read while I do a lot of things. I'm perplexed at women who don't seem to have the same sense of efficiency, but then, most women are not given to this masculine type of logical thinking. While a man thinks "One, two, three, four,"—a woman often thinks, "Nine, thirteen, six, one, forty-two." Or, as someone else said: A man thinks with his head—a woman with her heart.

Therefore it wasn't unusual for Jackie to eat her breakfast in silence as I read. Nor was it out of the ordinary for her to finally begin a conversation with the top of my head, which was bent over the well-marked paper be-

side my now empty plate.

Sipping on a cup of spiced tea, she began to ramble about something she had discovered while reading the creation story in Genesis. I grunted an occasional noise of recognition, not really hearing but not wanting to offend her, either.

Like most husbands, I've learned it's best to give an impression of interest. Perhaps it's a hangover from the time I used to rush back to the door of the church after a Sunday morning service to shake hands with my parishioners. Smiling, always smiling. And agreeing. But never really listening. If someone did try to tell me something I would give them a big "God bless you, brother," all the while pulling him through the door as I shook his hand. This way, to carry on a conversation he'd have to look back over his shoulder, which was discouraging since by that time I'd be shaking hands with the person behind him. It's a trick used by politicians and preachers—both notorious as people who never listen.

"Guess what I discovered in Genesis this morning," Jackie said to the top of my head.



"Uh, that's nice," I mumbled, trying not to lose my place. Then vaguely realizing I had given a stupid reply, I added, "Ah...what did you learn?"

"I learned that God gave Adam the command not to eat of the tree in the garden long before Eve was created."

"That's interesting," I answered. (By the way, this is a phrase I picked up from Pat Robertson which means, "I don't know what you're talking about but I don't want to question you since it might stimulate you to keep on talking.")

She kept on talking. "The whole problem with the human race, all the problems of the world, stem from one thing."

She was determined to press on.

"Uh huh, what's that?"

"Adam didn't talk to his wife. That's where all the problems came from. He knew everything God wanted, but he just didn't communicate with Eve. He was too busy 'dressing the garden.' When he wouldn't talk to her, she finally wandered off and found a slick fellow who would talk."

Somehow, in my state of semi-concentration, I sensed I shouldn't pursue this topic of conversation. I adjusted my glasses and hastily blue-penciled a redundant sentence which was trying to creep into print.

"What do you think about that?" Jackie was determined to get some kind of response.

"That's interesting," I mumbled. I could tell by the way the table was vibrating she was about to erupt. Avoiding her eyes, I glanced at my watch, picked up the stack of papers and started out of the room. "Thanks for a great breakfast," I said sincerely. "It's nice to be here with you on Saturday morning."

"But you aren't 'with me,'" she said, a trace of pain in her voice. "All those women out there think you're God's man of faith and power—writing all those things about husbands loving their wives, about men being the priests in their homes, about proper spiritual covering. But all I ever see is the top of your head at the table and the back of your head at the typewriter."

I smiled and patted her shoulder. We make a great team. She makes all the minor decisions such as which col-

lege the kids will attend and what brand of tires to put on the car, while I make the big decisions such as how to settle all the problems in the Kingdom. I started up the steps toward my studio, reading as I went. I read while I do a lot of things.

"Where are you going?"

"Well...uh...er...I've got to dress the garden...I mean, finish typing this manuscript. By the way, what's for lunch?"

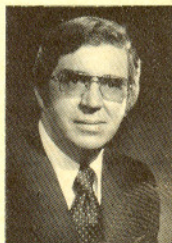
"Apples," she said with a note of resignation. "Fresh from the tree."

I nodded. "Uh...that's interesting."

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