



## Book Review

Gary Thomas, *Sacred Influence: How God uses wives to shape the souls of their husbands* (Zondervan, 2007)

When a good sister in Christ suggested a possible review of Gary Thomas' book, *Sacred Influence*, I thought: Great! After all, I've been married 30 years, I have a terrific husband and four beautiful sons. And I also loved Thomas' previous book, *Sacred Marriage*.<sup>1</sup>

Why is it that when we write something down on paper on how to be a great influence on our men, we can have so much conviction and strength – and yet be so weak and wilful when those convictions are put to the test? Why, even with a good marriage, do we at times still go through times of struggle? Why? Because we are *beautifully flawed* – so says Thomas.

As a woman in an all-male family, I'm naturally protective of my men. Men have profoundly good qualities which are uniquely theirs. Their loyalty, their single mindedness and their great big hearts are wonderful to witness.

However, in the opening chapters of this book, Thomas hones in on the *flawed* aspects of a man's nature: his selfishness and his tendency to see women as weak and emotional, etc. These flaws or sins often cause much damage to the women in men's lives, leaving their women demoralised and turning them into nagging, ungrateful, bitter people.

At this point I wanted to bin the book. You may feel the same way, but read a little further. Because Thomas isn't about to spare women's feelings either. According to Thomas, women have a sinful tendency to define themselves 'according to their likeability or acceptance by

men' (p 20). Instead, he suggests: 'God, not your marital status, defines your life. Is this true of you? The more it is, the more success you will have in moving your man, because weak women usually forfeit their influence.' (p 21).

Keep reading and the wisdom of Thomas is revealed. After all, since women are more likely to read self-help books to 'fix' their husbands, isn't it logical that a man should write such a book?

Thomas then calls women to have a faith of their own. He addresses the common mistakes some women make in trying to make their marriages work. I particularly liked chapter 6, which is titled 'The Helper', because it embraces the high call of marriage. Some women view this aspect of Christian marriage – a wife being a helper to her husband – as subservient and demeaning.

But I think Thomas has a very scriptural view on our contribution to our husband's lives. He points out that being a helper is not meant to be demeaning; otherwise, the Bible would be demeaning God when it describes God as our helper (Exodus 18:4, Deuteronomy 33:29, Psalm 10:4, Psalm 27:9, Psalm 118:7).

This review is in no way comprehensive. What I can say is that Thomas' book stirred up a lot of emotion in me. But he also

challenged me to be a more Christ-like woman. I love my Barrie and I feel very blessed to be his wife even after thirty years of marriage. We both know there are real dangers facing our society, with no-cause divorce laws and many marriages under pressure. This book may safeguard a good marriage and may well save a struggling one. ■



<sup>1</sup> Gary Thomas, *Sacred Marriage: What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy* (Zondervan, 2000)