

TWISTING RON KANGAS'S WORDS

Context and balance are critical to evaluating words fairly. Recently, a short excerpt from a message given by Brother Ron Kangas was mischaracterized as his demeaning his wife in front of thousands of people. This misrepresents Brother Ron's attitude toward his own wife and toward marriage in general; moreover, it neglects the context of his speaking and the point he was making.

The speaking in question was from a semiannual training on the book of Numbers in a message concerning the principles of God's governmental administration, examples of rebellion against that government, God's vindication of His authority, and how to properly represent God. The particular point of complaint concerned Brother Ron's exposition and application of Numbers 12. There Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses for a perceived failure (v. 1). Moses did not defend himself, but under God's governmental dealing Miriam became leprous (v. 10), a sign of the sin of rebellion against God's authority (2 Kings 5:20-27; 2 Chron. 26:16-21). It was in the context of the rebellion of Miriam and Aaron that Ron said:

Over the years, we have suffered from a number of "Miriams" in at least four ways:

- 1) Some claim authority for themselves because they are married to a co-worker or to an elder. They crown themselves, saying, "You are a co-worker now, and so am I. We are a team."
- 2) The brother may make the big mistake of fostering this kind of concept in his wife. He may even exalt her, telling others, "Listen to her. She knows how to pray with authority. She knows how to pray prayers of spiritual warfare." In contrast, those who really know how to pray in this way, simply pray in this way. They do not boast or talk about it.
- 3) Some females usurp authority. They claim to be the spiritual head over their husbands. They turn everything upside down. This has actually happened.
- 4) The husband may give in to such a usurping wife. He may even take the lead to rebel. In 1974 the church in Anaheim was established, and a certain man, who is now with the Lord, wanted there to be leading sisters. Brother Lee did not agree. However, this brother appointed three anyway, including his wife. They and the women who followed them caused some of the most painful and traumatic suffering that we have ever experienced. Eventually, Brother Lee said, "This is a cancer." They rejected Brother Lee's fellowship, but the Lord cut that cancer out of the Body.

I am so thankful I have my companion, my wife, to travel with me wherever I go, but I am the co-worker; I am the one ministering. She is nothing. She is no one. She is just my wife. I will never crown her. I will never exalt her. To do so would be to damage her. (Ron Kangas, *The Ministry of the Word* 23:7 (July 2019), 229-230)

To excerpt and re-contextualize all or part of the last paragraph, which is less than 1% of the entire message, conveys two false impressions: 1) that the ministry in the Lord's recovery demeans females; and 2) that Brother Ron specifically demeans his own wife. Both are absurd. The paragraph quoted must be read as a contrast to the four preceding points, which show how the improper exaltation of sisters, especially by their husbands, damages both those sisters and the church. Ron was speaking in this portion of the message on the rebellions against Moses as God's deputy authority that are recorded in Numbers 12 and 16. Would the critics have Ron skip the story of Miriam's leprosy and the lessons to be learned from it? Would they have him ignore the lessons from our own history? Those who follow the speaking of the ministry in the Lord's recovery know that the brothers, including Brother Ron, speak much more regularly to the leading brothers in the churches about rebellions instigated by ambitious brothers,

charging the leading ones not to exercise control or lord it over the saints but to shepherd them and become a pattern to them (1 Pet. 5:2-3). In the same message in which Brother Ron spoke about Miriam, he spent an equal amount of time on the rebellion of Korah, a rebellion led by men and fueled by rivalry and ambition in the service of the Lord, and more than twice as much time on how to properly represent God as a leading brother.

Anyone who has heard Brother Ron speak of marriage knows how much he honors the biblical pattern of caring for one's spouse. Speaking in 2015 he said, "God's will is that a man love, cherish, and honor his wife" (*The Ministry of the Word* 19:5 (May 2015), 157). The year before that, he strongly charged the leading brothers in the churches not to lord it over others, including their own wives:

Brothers, do not take that way of control, of dominating the saints, or of lording it over others. Do not take that way in your marriage. Marriage is a life of intimate mutuality in love, where the man is under Christ, and the woman is under the man and loves it, because it is an intimate mutuality with mutual care, cherishing, nourishing, and sacrificing love. (Ron Kangas, "Experiencing Christ as Stone and Iron for the Church as the House of God and the City of God," *The Ministry of the Word* 18:3 (March 2014), 205)

Ron has spoken elsewhere concerning the need for husbands to honor their wives as fellow heirs of the grace of life as mentioned in 1 Peter 3:7 (for example, in *The Ministry of the Word* 2:5 (May 1988), 76-77; and 20:10 (October 2016), 167). Indeed, we should honor every believer as a member of the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:10; 1 Cor. 12:23-24). In the Body of Christ all the members have a function based on their measure and the operation of the Lord's grace in them (Rom. 12:6; Eph. 3:7; 4:7; 1 Pet. 4:10). The measure of one member cannot be transferred to another, even when the two are joined in marriage.

When it is read in context, Brother Ron's point in mentioning his wife in his message on Miriam was not to denigrate her but to illustrate that his role in serving the Lord as a co-worker does not bestow any status in the Lord's work upon her. In saying this, he was warning leading brothers not to assume that their wives share in their role in the church, for this will cause damage both to their wives and to the church. This is equally true of husbands whose wives serve the ministry or the church in some capacity. Suppose a married sister serves in Living Stream Ministry (LSM). Her service gives her husband no standing to touch any matter related to LSM. Were he to presume otherwise and interfere with the service of LSM, he would likewise cause damage.

Brother Ron was correct in saying that the exalting of certain sisters by their husbands was a major factor in the turmoil among the churches in the late 1970s. At that time a group of sisters, led by the wives of two co-workers and elders, used their "status" as "leading sisters" to gather a private circle to be the "spiritual" ones in the church. In correcting the superior attitude displayed by this clique of sisters, Brother Lee directly charged them not to group themselves together but to prove the genuineness of their spirituality by shepherding the weaker saints (*All Ages for the Lord's Testimony*, 43-46). The point throughout Brother Ron's speaking is to learn from the biblical examples and our own history so as not to repeat the same mistakes. It would be foolish to assume that such germs do not still exist among the churches.

Wrenching quotes from context and presenting them in an unbalanced manner is a common tactic used in attacks on the leadership in the ministry and the work in the Lord's recovery. Our hope and prayer is that no one will be stumbled by such a deceitful and reprehensible practice but will understand the spirit in which the words were ministered and be perfected by the biblical insights they convey.