

What is Marriage – D. Luff

I. What is Marriage?

Note: Some comments drawn from the book entitled Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible by Jay E. Adams Chapters 1-3.

A. Genesis 2:18-24 (New International Version, ©2011)

¹⁸ The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” ¹⁹ Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³ The man said, **“This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.”** ²⁴ *That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.*

1. Marriage is not a human institution designed by man and which has evolved over time as a convenient way of designating responsibilities of men and women for children, bread winning, housekeeping, etc. It is a divine institution designed and ordained by God. It is to be a covenantal relationship between one man and one woman for life. It is the foundational element of all human society. If marriage were of human origin, men would have the right to set it aside. However, God established it, and only He has the right to set it aside.

No individual or the state has the right or even the capability to set forth the rules for marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Only God has the right and the capability of setting forth the basis for these things, and He has given them to us in the Bible. It is the responsibility of the Church to administer the principles set forth by God in the Scriptures.

2. Marriage is the foundation on which God’s society, the Church, the kingdom of God is set. It is the basic structural unit of the Church and therefore the kingdom of God on the earth. It was established before any other formal structural unit of God’s society was established. It is a unique decision-making unit under one head with which God deals.

Marriage is under attack today. However, it is really an attack on society and on God who built the society on marriage. As marriage is weakened the society is weakened. As marriage within the Church is weakened, then the kingdom of God on the earth is weakened. Therefore, the weakening of marriage is no light matter.

3. Marriage is not the institution designed to propagate the human race. Although it is true that procreation is a duty that exists only in marriage, it is not the fundamental feature of marriage. Marriage is more than mating. Humans are quite capable of populating the earth outside the confines of marriage.

Also, marriage is not to be equated with sexual relations. Marriage and only marriage authorizes sexual relations but again, it is not its primary purpose.

WHAT THEN IS THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE?

B. What Is the Primary Reason for Marriage?

Genesis 2:18 (New International Version, ©2010)

¹⁸ The LORD God said, *“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”*

The reason for marriage is to solve the problem of loneliness. Marriage is a “**Covenant of Companionship**”. Marriage was established because Adam was alone, and God said that that was not a good thing.

Proverbs 2:16-17 (New King James Version)

¹⁶ *To deliver you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words, ¹⁷ Who forsakes the **companion** of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God.*

Malachi 2:14 (New King James Version)

¹⁴ *Yet you say, “For what reason?” Because the LORD has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your **companion** And your wife by **covenant**.*

The word “companion” in these references means one that has a close, intimate union or relationship to another. What then is a companion? It is one with whom one enters into a close union or relationship, with whom one is intimately united in thoughts, goals, plans, efforts, and in the case of marriage, bodies. Love in marriage focuses on giving one’s spouse the companionship he or she needs to eliminate loneliness.

What is a covenant? It is a formal and serious agreement or promise usually between two parties.

Therefore, Marriage could be fairly defined as a “**Covenant of Companionship.**”

C. Marriage Involves Leaving and Cleaving

The main reason that marriage and family is the topic for this E&D meeting is because there are more marriage and family problems in the Church than all the others combined. These problems arise due to many different reasons. We will attempt to address a number of these reasons during these meetings. However, since marriage is about companionship, many marriage problems arise when husbands and wives get so involved in separate activities that companionship suffers.

Genesis 2:24 (King James Version)

²⁴ *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto (be joined to) his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*

It is God’s design that a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife. There is no covenantal relationship between parents and children. That relationship is temporary. The relationship between husband and wife is until death invalidates the covenant.

The emphasis on leaving and cleaving is on the husband not because it is not also required of the wife but because it is he who must become the head of a new decision-making unit. He may receive advice and counsel from parents but not commands.

By the same token, women must not look to children or their parents to solve their problems of loneliness. Under God, husbands and wives must put one another first. A marriage that neglects the primary aspect of companionship is headed for trouble. Those things which promote companionship must be cultivated.

D. Marriage Is Only Between One Man and One Woman

Today many in society are advocating same-sex marriage. All the scriptures quoted above speak of marriage as involving a man and a woman.

Genesis 1:27-28 (King James Version)

²⁷ *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; **male and female created he them.***

²⁸ *And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be **fruitful, and multiply**, and replenish the earth, and subdue it:*

and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

The command to multiply and replenish the earth cannot be fulfilled in a same-sex relationship. In fact God refers to a same-sex relationship is an “abomination” to God.

Leviticus 20:13 (King James Version)

¹³If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.

II. Marriage Is Designed for Christians

Ephesians 5:32 (NIV1984)

This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

1 John 5:12 (KJV)

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

It is really impossible to understand the mystery of marriage, the wonderful differences in men and women, and how the institution of marriage is to be a reflection of Christ and the Church, unless husbands and wives have had a life-changing experience with Christ.

Being Christians does not guarantee that there will not be problems and conflicts that will arise in a marriage, but trying to deal with them with nothing but the old carnal nature in control most often leads to disaster. Many of the truths we will cover in these meetings will sometimes not make sense to the natural mind. The truth in them will only be sensed as true by the Holy Spirit.

In these meetings we will be talking a lot about the differences in men and women. Without the Spirit of God to provide insight, understanding, and the need to forgive, the principles we discuss will make little sense.

1 Corinthians 2:10 (KJV)

¹⁰But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

I feel that when we counsel couples planning marriage, it is vitally important that the couples understand the importance of not only being Christians but also have a real relationship with Christ and his teaching of unconditional love (and respect).

III. Meeting One Another’s Needs God’s Ways

The following study is based largely on material taken from the book entitled Love and Respect by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs.

A. The Marriage Secrets from Ephesians 5:25-33

Ephesians 5:25-33 (New International Version, ©2010)

*²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—³⁰for we are members of his body. ³¹“**For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.**”*

³² *This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.* ³³ *However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

1. What does Eph. 5:33 really say?

The word “love” is **agape** meaning unconditional love; the kind of love Christ has for the Church. The rest of the verse **strongly suggests** that wives are to give **unconditional respect (must respect)** to their husbands. The Scripture often places emphasis on the husband because he is head of the wife and the initiator in the relationship. However, God does not excuse the wife from the unconditionality of the command. The word “must” emphasizes the unconditional aspect of His command to both husbands and wives.

A husband is to obey the command of Christ to love his wife even if she does not obey the command to respect him; and a wife is to obey the command to respect her husband even if her husband does not obey the command to treat his wife in a loving way.

To say it another way; there is no justification for a husband to say, “I will love my wife after she shows me some respect.” A wife cannot say, “I will respect my husband when he earns my respect by meeting my needs for affection and love.”

2. The Love-Respect Connection

When a husband feels disrespected he has a natural tendency to react in ways that feel unloving to his wife. When a wife feels unloved she has a natural tendency to react in ways that feel disrespectful to her husband. This destructive behavior can become a cycle that spirals downward and results in a negative impact on the marriage relationship.

3. The Wisdom of Love and Respect

A **woman needs love like she needs air to breathe. A man needs respect like he needs air to breathe.** This begs the question, “Don’t women need respect and men need love?” Of course, we all need both love and respect equally. However, Eph. 5:33 seems to validate the fact that women are created with an innate need to feel and be loved. On the other hand, men are created with an innate need to feel and be respected. A survey has shown that during a conflict with one’s spouse, 83% of the men said that they felt disrespected and 72% of the women reported that they felt unloved.

Respect is a man’s deepest value. Ask a man if he would rather live with a woman who respected him but did not love him or live with woman who loved him but did not respect him. You might be surprised at the answer. Does that mean a man does not have a significant need for love? Of course not! However, they need to feel respected more than they need to feel loved.

In a national study, 400 men were given a choice between two different negative experiences. If they were forced to choose one of the following, which would they prefer to endure?

- a) be left alone and unloved in the world
- b) feel inadequate and disrespected by everyone

74% of these men said that if they were forced to choose, they would prefer being alone and unloved in the world.

Note: Survey performed by Decision Analysis, Inc. and tabulated by Analytic Focus for Shaunti Feldhahn, For Women Only

The apostle Peter agrees with Paul in supporting a husband’s need for respect.

1 Peter 3:1-2 (New Living Translation)

In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over by observing your pure and reverent lives.

This scripture seems to refer to a husband whom God is not pleased with and who does not deserve his wife's respect. However, Peter's command is not for the wife to feel respect for her husband, but rather to show respectful behavior without conditions. Most women have no problem understanding and embracing the concept of unconditional love. They are born with a natural inclination to show love. However, the term unconditional respect seems like an oxy-moron. In their minds respect cannot just be given; it must be earned. If it is given when it is undeserved, it only encourages their husbands to become even more arrogant and use them like door mats. However, the scripture I Peter 1:1-2 disputes that argument. Another way to look at it is, as a wife, should you have to earn your husband's love? For example, if you have gained a few pounds since your wedding day, does this give your husband the right to act in an unloving way towards you until you lose the weight? Of course not!

Peter is not saying that the unloving behavior of a husband is to be respected. For example, a wife is not expected to respect her husband's addiction to pornography. What he is saying is that even unacceptable behavior on the part of a husband must be addressed by his wife in a respectful way. We will have more to say about this later.

As Christians we are not to be people of human logic but rather to be people of faith – faith in God's Word.

The wisdom of love and respect is a secret to marriage that every couple seeks, and yet few couples find. The key to achieving a new high level of intimacy in marriage is to accept the fact that unconditional respect is as powerful for him as unconditional love is for her. When you touch your spouse's deepest need something good almost always happens. It's as simple and as difficult as that.

When a woman feels loved she is happy. When a man feels respected he is happy. When either of these needs isn't met, conflict is inevitable.

IV. Two Vital Truths for Better Communication

A. In Marriage What Comes Out of Your Mouth Matters

Remember the nursery rhyme: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me." In truth, words cannot only hurt, they can destroy a relationship.

Proverbs 15:1 (NIV1984)

*A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

Proverbs 12:18 (NIV1984)

*Reckless words pierce like a sword,
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*

Ephesians 4:25 (NIV1984)

²⁵ *Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.*

Ephesians 4:29 (NIV1984)

²⁹ *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*

Ephesians 4:31-32 (NIV1984)

³¹ *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Ephesians 5:4 (NIV1984)

⁴ *Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.*

Ephesians 5:18-19 (NIV1984)

¹⁸ *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. ¹⁹ Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,*

If there is any group of people that need to know how to use words, it is married couples.

Can my spouse be expected to have confidence that I have proper love and respect in my heart toward them if I speak untruthful, unwholesome, unforgiving, unthankful, and unscriptural words to him or her? By the same token what might happen in our marriages if we spoke truthful, wholesome, forgiving, thankful, and scriptural words to our marriage partners?

Our words reveal what is in our heart.

Luke 6:45 (KJV)

⁴⁵ *A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.*

Ephesians 4:29 Worldwide English (New Testament)

²⁹ *Do not let any bad words come out of your mouth. But say good things that will help people. Then those who hear you will also be blessed by what you say.*

Ephesians 5:4 (NIV1984)

⁴ *Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.*

We should remember that our words are a good indication of what is going on in our heart, and our spouses know it. If husbands speak unloving words and wives speak words that sound disrespectful then their spouses will start to doubt if they are really loved and respected.

When Jan is trying to talk to me and I sort of grunt out a disinterested uh-huh as my focus continues on the computer screen or the TV, she will start to feel a little unloved. Or how about this response to a wife's description of her point of view on a controversial topic:

"I can't make any sense of the disconnected thoughts you have tried to link together. Can't you get to some bottom line? I get so frustrated when we try to discuss things. I don't think I will ever understand you."

You may love your wife, but that kind of conversation sure doesn't communicate love.

The same goes for men. They need reassurance also. Consider the following conversation:

"Hey honey, guess what happened at work today. Someone came to me with a problem today, and I was really able to help him find a solution."

"Um-hummmmm. That's great honey. What do you want for dinner?"

He can easily come to the conclusion that you do not value his work which comes across as disrespect.

I know. We can't always speak perfectly.

James 3:2 (NIV1984)

² *We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.*

However, we can ask God to help us to speak less *imperfectly*.

Proverbs 16:23 (NIV1984)

²³ *A wise man's heart guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction.*

Proverbs 15:28 (NIV1984)

²⁸ *The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil.*

B. Watch the Hot-Button Words

“You always.....” This is an untrue statement. Your spouse doesn't “always.”

C. Not Wrong, Just Different (Differences in Pink and Blue)

Genesis 1:27 (New International Version, ©2011)

²⁷ *So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*

...and they are as different as pink and blue. But together in marriage a blue husband and a pink wife reflect the image of God. It is interesting to note that when you combine pink and blue you form the color purple, the color of royalty, the color that represents God.

God has said “that the two will become one flesh.” When the two become one they have the potential of displaying God's attributes and character in the earth. This is what was in God's heart when He ordained marriage. If we are married this should be our heart's desire also.

Unfortunately, the pink and blue differences often result in conflict rather than displaying the character of God. So often the God-given differences are seen as a David and Jan problem rather than a male – female issue. When we learn this the issue becomes not personal but rather an integral element of God's design.

Pink and Blue Glasses

To help us understand this better, it may be helpful for us to realize that women, being pink, look at the world through pink-tinted glasses, while men see the world through blue-tinted glasses. The view is often entirely different. They are looking at the same thing, but they don't see the same thing. Perhaps even more importantly, **men and women hear very differently**. Women hear through pink hearing aids while men hear through blue hearing aids. Believe me, they can hear the same spoken words and come away with completely different meanings.

Consider the following statement from a wife: “I have nothing to wear.”

What she means is that she has nothing *new* to wear.

When a man says he has nothing to wear he means he has nothing *clean* to wear.

Or what about the subject of excess oil? For women it refers in some way to the condition of their skin. For men it refers to machinery or a slippery garage floor.

When a wife hears the words “let’s go shopping” she responds with excitement. When a man hears those words he starts figuring how he can get out of it.

Each uses the same words but their meanings are totally different.

However, the differences in pink and blue go further than these simple and humorous examples. Men and women are wired differently by God’s design.

(Review the conversation that a man might have with a friend and his wife’s questions about the friend’s family.)

The differences between men and women were established from the beginning. Women tend to be relationship oriented, and the family is their primary place for relationships. The most meaningful question you can ask a woman is “Are you loved? I would go a step forward and say that the better question is “Do you feel loved?” It is one thing for a woman to know something intellectually and yet another thing for her to experience the feeling of it on a daily basis.

Men, however, tend to be achievement-oriented, and their “field” or work environment is the primary place where they can experience achievement. The most meaningful question you can ask a man is “Are you respected?”

These two deep needs are carried into marriage where the wife wants her husband to be more loving and the husband wants his wife to be more respectful.

Most husbands would say that they are loving to their wives, and most wives would say that they are respectful to their husbands. But here is where the tinted glasses and hearing aids come into play.

V. Breaking the Code

A. Men and Women Communicate in Code

If husbands and wives are to understand the principle of love and respect, they must realize that they communicate in code, based on their gender without realizing it or meaning to do so. The problem is that they don’t know how to decipher each other’s code.

“What I say is not what you hear, and what you think you heard is not what I meant at all.”

Do you ever get into an argument with your spouse, but afterwards you aren’t sure why? You see your spouse bristle or deflate right before your eyes and you wonder what’s wrong or what’s happening? The response typically is “If only she weren’t so touchy” or “If only he weren’t so childish.”

Just because as a wife you may feel unloved or as a husband you may feel disrespected does not mean your spouse is intentionally sending that message. We are so inclined to focus entirely on our own needs and simply overlook the needs of our spouse. The wife needs love; she is not trying to be disrespectful. The husband needs respect; he is not trying to be unloving. It is so easy for us to be keenly aware of our own needs and particularly how they are not being met. However, it is unnatural or therefore difficult for us to be sensitive and sacrificially giving to the needs of our spouse.

(Share example of husband coming home after being out of town for a week.)

Ephesians 4:29 (New International Version, ©2011)

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Philippians 2:4 (New International Version, ©2011)

⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

1 Peter 3:7 (New International Version, ©2011)

⁷ Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

To avoid the downward cycle of conflict we must remember that wives need love and husbands need respect.

Husbands, as we consider our wives, we must remember I Peter 3:7. When Peter refers to our wives as the weaker vessel, he is not saying they are not strong or of less value. Women are like a piece of fine china. She is not to be treated roughly or coarsely as the way a man might interact with another man. She is soft and easily bruised and should be handled with great care. It is these very characteristics that enable her to sit up all night with a sick child and still be put in a full day's work the next day. It is this "weaker" nature that enables her to subordinate her needs and desires to the needs of her family.

As husbands, when we become loud, sometimes without realizing it, our wives see that as unloving behavior, and they wilt right before our eyes.

If a wife deflates because of something her husband did or said, any other woman observing the exchange will see it as unloving in exactly the same way. They are wired that way. When our wives try to unload their hearts on us husbands, we jump immediately to problem solving and solution development. **When I do this my wife feels that I have not really listened to her and have not been interested or taken the time to really understand her heart which is what she desperately wants and what she receives as love.**

Men are "fixers." If a man goes to another man with a problem he assumes that that man wants some suggested solutions which is usually the case. When a man receives a phone call from another man after saying hello, his next thought is "What do you want?"

Let's be clear. Our wives don't want their husbands to be like their girl friends. They want us to be men, but they want us to treat them in loving ways. We are the only man in their life who can give them the love they deeply need.

Titus 2:3-4 (New International Version, ©2011)

³ Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. ⁴ Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children...

In the above scripture the Greek word for love is *phileo* which refers to a human or brotherly kind of love.

Very often when a wife feels unloved she will respond to her husband in a way that he takes as disrespectful. When a wife rolls her eyes or displays a scowl on her face, her husband sees that as contempt for him and which he interprets as disrespect. If another man observes her response, he will see the disrespect in exactly the same way. What Paul is saying to Titus is for older, more experienced women to help the younger women decipher the code. Even though a wife may feel she has been spoken to in an unloving way, she should try to show more *phileo* when she responds. Avoid that kind of impatience, unfriendliness, and sighing way too much in responding to their husbands.

Wives care deeply. Her motives are filled with *agape*, but her methods often lack *phileo*.

When men are criticized they feel they have been treated with contempt, and they get silent or “stonewall.” Women receive their silence as hostility, and the downward spiral of conflict starts spinning.

Often both spouses have goodwill but are not deciphering each other’s code. She criticizes out of love, but he “hears” only disrespect. He distances himself to prevent things from escalating which he thinks is the honorable thing to do, but she sees only his failure to be loving!

In a nut shell this is how most conflicts start:

When a wife feels unloved, she tends to react in a way that feels disrespectful to her husband. When a husband feels disrespected, he tends to react in a way that feels unloving to his wife. As this cycle repeats itself, the downward spiral is in steep descent.

B. The Air Tank Comparison

Think of the concept of love and respect like this:

A wife has an air hose which is a lifeline that is attached to a love tank. When her husband says or does something that is unloving to her it is like she gets a crimp in her air hose and she starts to suffocate emotionally.

Her husband has an air hose that is attached to a respect tank. When his wife says or does something which he feels is disrespectful, he gets a crimp in his air hose and he starts to suffocate.

2 Samuel 6

The Ark Brought to Jerusalem

¹ David again brought together out of Israel chosen men, thirty thousand in all. ² He and all his men set out from Baalah of Judah^[a] to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name,^[b] the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim that are on the ark. ³ They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart ⁴ with the ark of God on it,^[c] and Ahio was walking in front of it. ⁵ David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with songs^[d] and with harps, lyres, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals.

¹⁴ David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the LORD with all his might, ¹⁵ while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

¹⁶ As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she despised him in her heart.

²⁰ When David returned home to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, “How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!”

²¹ David said to Michal, “It was before the LORD, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the LORD’s people Israel—I will celebrate before the LORD. ²² I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor.”

²³ And Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.

Genesis 30:1-2 (NIV1984)

¹ When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she became jealous of her sister. So she said to Jacob, “Give me children, or I’ll die!”² Jacob became angry with her and said, “Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?”

Your mate hears and sees things differently. When a husband does or says something that is felt as unloving by his wife, he pinches her air hose. If he is at all perceptive, he will be able to tell that he has done this. He will see her deflate before his eyes. Her expression will indicate it. You can see it in her eyes. Maybe she will even say something about it. The same thing can happen when a wife does or says something that feels disrespectful to her husband. Usually a husband will clam up and withdraw, but a perceptive wife will be able to detect it.

A typical response is that the other should not have taken it that way. They are being childish and immature. Their first response is to defend themselves, because it is their problem.

The fact is it is not just their problem. “The two have become one flesh.” It is never just their problem. It’s always your problem too. Regardless of what you might think, you have said or done something that sounds unloving or disrespectful to your spouse.

Remember, most of the time, one is not wrong, just different.

Steps to stopping the crazy cycle in mid spin:

1. Remember your spouse is fundamentally a good-willed person.
2. Think about how you probably stepped on your spouse’s air hose. **Don’t be defensive, be patient. Don’t become defensive. Be patient.** Don’t jump to conclusions. Put the emphasis on understanding before being understood.
3. Don’t say things like “You are unloving” or “You are disrespectful.”

A wife might say “That felt unloving” or “Did I come across as disrespectful? If the answer is yes, the wife might say “I’m sorry for being disrespectful. Will you please forgive me? How could I have come across more respectfully?”

Or the husband might say “What you said felt disrespectful. Did I come across as unloving? Will you forgive me? How can I come across more lovingly?”

4. Never use phrases like “You always.....”, “You never.....”, “I can’t believe you just did/said that.”

Consider the following scenario: (Husband and wife on evening out and husband tells his wife she is a “critical” person.)

There are two questions that are worth asking ourselves before we speak:

1. Is what I am about to do or say going to feel unloving to her?
2. Is what I am about to do or say going to feel disrespectful to him?

Finally, **ALWAYS BE WILLING TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE.**

VI. Forgiveness – The Key to Stopping the Downward Cycle

When unloving or disrespectful words or expressions are communicated we can always think of reasons to not forgive:

1. I don't deserve to be treated this way. (I am a good person, and this is unfair.)
2. I refuse to be treated this way anymore. (I must protect myself from this kind of treatment.)
3. I'm not going to let my spouse off the hook this time. They need to pay for this.
4. I have a right to feel this way. I'm right about this. Even Jesus was righteously indignant at times.
5. My friends will support me in this. They listen and understand. They have been where I am.

Here is what God's word has to say about our unfair treatment:

Matthew 18:21-22 (NIV1984)

²¹ Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" ²² Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."^[a]

Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV1984)

¹⁴ For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

This scripture does not mean we will lose our eternal salvation, but we will lose our fellowship with God. When we pray the heavens will seem as brass.

1 Peter 3: (NIV1984)

⁷ Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

I think the same applies to wives.

When it comes to forgiveness our communication and fellowship with God must be our primary focus. As important as our relationship with our spouse is, it is secondary to our relationship with God.

VII. Five Ways to Communicate Love to Your Wife (C-O-U-P-L-E)

A. Closeness – She wants you to be close. Gen. 2:24 "Leave father and mother and cleave to your wife....."

Cleave (Hebrew) – cling, hold, keep close

Cleaving is much more than sexual. It is also spiritual and emotional closeness. Your wife will feel loved when you move toward her with a look, touch, and smile.

Deuteronomy 24:5 (King James Version)

⁵When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken.

A new husband was free to stay at home for a year. It sets the tone for closeness in the first year before the wear and tear of life begins.

In our society this is not possible, but the principle still has application. For example, when a husband comes home from work, the first few moments set the tone for the rest of the evening. He should greet his wife with a hug and kiss, tell her about your day and ask about hers. Help her in the kitchen even if it is just to set the table.

The key here is to get emotionally close and let her know you want to know where her heart is. For your wife face-to-face time is heart-to-heart time.

(Give example of what you see in the intimate settings in coffee shops.)

Give example of Nat Swaan and Rachel – she takes his face in her hands and directs it to her face-to-face. If you're not looking you're not listening.

You cannot motivate your spouse to give you what you want and need by withholding what they really need. Rather practice the Golden Rule. You can either motivate your wife in the right way or demoralize her. It's your choice.

Hold her hand, hug her – especially when she is hurting. Be affectionate, tell her she is pretty, but don't be sexually aggressive. If you do these things only when you want sex, it will be huge turn-off.

Song of Solomon 3: (NIV1984)

⁴ *Scarcely had I passed them when I found the one my heart loves. I held him and would not let him go till I had brought him to my mother's house, to the room of the one who conceived me.*

One way to picture your marriage is as a line:

Involvement _____ Independence
(Wife) (Husband)

The tension between involvement and independence is evidence of the difference between pink and blue. A husband will probably not be as involved as his wife would like, but sensitivity to her need here is important.

Men are not expected to be like women who sit at tiny tables and sip coffee as they share face-to face. You are a man, and your wife loves you for being a man, not a woman. She does not want you to be feminine like girlfriend. But when you move closer to her, and show her even in small ways that you want to connect, it will motivate and energize her.

1 Corinthians 11: (NIV1984)

¹¹ *In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.*

The cost is inexpensive – just some time and love.

B. Openness – She wants you to be open with her.

Wives want to talk about things. She wants problems out in the open in order to solve them. She is open-expressive. Husbands, on the other hand tend to play it close to the vest. He is “compartmentalized.” His wife senses something is upsetting him, but he insists nothing is wrong. She can't accept that, so she keeps probing. She longs for his love which is experienced by connecting openly with his heart.

A good way to illustrate this is by thinking of the two different types of Christmas tree light circuitry. In one type, you can have what is called a parallel circuit. If one bulb is broken, all the other lights still burn. That represents how men operate. The other circuit is called a direct circuit. If one bulb is broken, all the other bulbs go out too.

That's the way women are. They are highly integrated. If a serious marital conflict exists in one area, this affects her whole being. All of her "lights" go out.

A husband can make one small remark that feels unloving to his wife, and she will be completely upset with him until things are repaired.

When your wife believes there is a problem, when she feels hurt, lonely, and neglected, she definitely has no interest in responding to you sexually. When her spirit is crushed, her body is unavailable.

There can be some seemingly small conflict between husband and wife before he goes off to work in the morning. When he returns home in the evening he has likely forgotten all about it. Not so with his wife. One does not have to be super intuitive to notice the crestfallen expression on his wife's face that was there when he left home that morning. He will probably have to be reminded what he did or said because he cannot remember. **She, on the other hand has relived the encounter a dozen times trying to determine how it happened and why.** He is ready to forget it and move on.

Talk about the box analogy.

Husbands must understand that when their wives seem to be interrogating them, they are just trying to get their husbands to open up to them, much like they did when they were courting. His openness spelled love to her in big, bold letters.

Why do men seem to become less open after marriage than they were when they were courting?

During courtship a man is trying to discover the woman of his dreams. He is open to find out about this woman he thinks may be it. When he determines that his dream has come true contentment tends to set in.

Song of Solomon 5: (NIV1984)

² *I slept but my heart was awake. Listen! My lover is knocking:*

"Open to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my flawless one.

My head is drenched with dew, my hair with the dampness of the night."

Wives tend to like to keep things up to date, to deal with problems as they arise rather than wait for them to stack up.

Husbands often feel that when their wives keep trying to get inside them that they are prying and invading their space too much. As husbands we must learn to decode this behavior realizing that our wives are good-willed women and just want to experience openness with us.

Prov. 31:12 "She does him good not evil all the days of her life."

If you really want to be unloving toward your wife, make her feel you are constantly mad at her. This will crush her. (See Col. 3:19) If we could only realize how much our wives need our love and how powerful it is when we show it.

Colossians 3:19 (KJV)

¹⁹ *Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*

How Do You Live With Such a Sensitive Creature?

Be careful as you ask this question. It is her sensitivity that enables her to sit up all night with a sick child and still not miss a beat the next day and wait on you when you're sick and moaning and groaning.

If you are tired and maybe discouraged when you get home from work and don't feel to talk about your day right then, tell her so and make sure she knows there is nothing wrong between the two of you. Those are the most important words she is looking for.

You mothers with boys, I suspect sometime as they were growing up, they spoke to you in a harsh way one time and you had to tell them not to speak you that way. They may have been surprised saying that is the way they talked to their friends. But you were not just their friend; you were their mother and a woman. That was a good lesson for them to begin to see that there is a difference between men and women and it is not just physical or anatomical.

C. Understanding – Don't Try to "Fix" Her; Just Listen

1 Peter 3:7 (New American Standard Bible)

You husbands in the same way live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

The scripture does not say for husbands to understand their wives but rather to live with them in an understanding way letting her know that you trust her heart.

Peter is not saying that women are weaker than men. He is saying that a wife is the weaker vessel because she is more sensitive and vulnerable to her husband within the relationship of marriage.

As husbands we can hurt our wives deeply when we say:

1. We don't understand her and it doesn't seem worthwhile to keep trying.
2. When we dishonor her by not treating her as an equal and "a fellow heir of the grace of life" (I Peter 3:7).

Peter is not saying that all women are weaker than all men. He is saying that a wife is vulnerable to her husband and when her husband does not seek to understand her, she is very vulnerable indeed.

Think of a husband and wife as two different bowls; one is made of copper (husband) and the other of porcelain (wife).

Both bowls are of equal value, but the porcelain bowl is more delicate. It can be cracked or even broken if one is not very careful. In the heat of frustration during a conflict, it is easy for a husband to say that he does not understand his wife and probably never will and then go off somewhere for awhile to stonewall.

If you, as a husband, have ever done this you will find that in the rain your feet will get wet because of the holes in the tops of your shoes because you have just shot yourself in both feet. A wife is not made or equipped to operate in that type of environment. She cannot even think or reason when she is hurt like that.

Remember, porcelain needs a sign that reads "Handle with Care."

Also remember that in a marriage the husband is the Christ figure and the wife is the church figure. Just as the church places its burdens on Christ so the wife wants to place her burdens on the shoulders of her husband. When she comes to you for understanding, it is a compliment, a show of respect.

If you shut her out and close her down because you don't seem to hear what she is trying to say, it is devastating to her spirit.

Most often the best thing a husband can do to show understanding to his wife is to just listen to her when she pours her heart out to you. As men we are wired to be “fixers.” When our wives bring us a problem our natural response is to try to fix it. Often we jump quickly to a solution before our wives have had the air time to really tell us how they feel. As husbands we need to learn to actively listen asking clarifying questions to show we are truly listening. It is good to even ask our wives if they want us to offer a solution or just to listen and let them know we understand.

D. Peacemaking – She Wants You to Say, ‘I’m Sorry.’

If there is a rift, a conflict, or even a sense of tension between you and your wife, you cannot be fully at peace. Without peace in the relationship, your wife cannot feel close, and she does not feel that there is understanding between the two of you.

God intends that there will be some conflict in marriage even at the very best.

1 Corinthians 7:28 (New International Version 1984)

*²⁸ But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. **But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.***

Working through conflict deepens your understanding and appreciation of one another. Some degree of conflict is healthy. As a couple works through them their relationship is strengthened.

However, whenever sparks fly in a conflict whether minor or serious, there is risk. It can do one of two things; sparks can cause a controllable fire that heats the home and makes things warm or they can result in a wildfire that burns the house down. The sparks will be there. It is a matter of how they are controlled.

Many men in trying to motivate their wives to show them respect have acted in an unloving way. They distance themselves from their wives, close themselves off in anger disregarding their wives’ feelings, argue to win, and never reach reconciliation. Rather than getting respect they got divorced. **A husband can never get respect from his wife by being unloving to her.**

Your wife will be conscious of conflict between the two of you before you will, and will move toward you in an effort to resolve the conflict and reach reconciliation. Don’t refuse to make peace by running from conflict. Conflict is not a sign you have a bad marriage. Remember, God said married couples would have troubles.

1 Corinthians 7:3-4 (New International Version 1984)

³ The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴ The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband’s body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.

This scripture can refer to more than just the sexual aspect of marriage. Pulling away from our spouse in the midst of a conflict violates the command of this scripture. I think Paul is saying that husbands and wives have different needs and will experience conflict, but they can work it out as partners. A husband should not act independently of his wife, and a wife should not act independently of her husband. They should and can act together.

In the case of conflict between men, apologies are the exception rather than the rule. They usually just agree to “drop it” and move on. What happens when a husband says this to his wife in the middle of conflict; “Drop it. Just forget it. It’s over with.” A wife will think her husband is really still angry with her and nothing has been resolved. Without resolution it will be very difficult for her to be happy and secure.

For any husband who wants fewer arguments the road to peace is plain. Learn to simply say, “Honey, I’m sorry. Will you forgive me? I did not mean to do that.” Do this even if you believe most of the guilt or blame is hers. The proportion of blame is not the issue. The real issue is love and respect.

A Short Course in Peacemaking

First, have absolute confidence in the power of a loving demeanor.

Proverbs 15:1 (New International Version 1984)

¹ *A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

Your loving attitude triggers something within her heart as a woman. God made her this way. In all likelihood she will reciprocate. A husband cannot out-give a good-willed wife. But when you give in, be sure you mean it. She will detect insincerity.

A husband can reasonably ask, “What if I keep on loving and keep giving in and am still treated with disrespect? At this point you’ve earned the right to say, “I am seeking to give in to you and to be loving, but I am feeling disrespected. What am I saying to you that sounds unloving?” Good-willed women tend to respond to reasonable, honest requests.

Second, you will make peace with her when you don’t blame her but, instead, confess your part of the blame.

James 5:16 (New International Version 1984)

¹⁶ *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*

It is important to sincerely say you really understand why she reacted the way she did and ask her to forgive you. Women are wired for equality. Although she does not like feeling inferior or in the wrong, she does not want you to feel inferior or in the wrong either.

Peacemaking can be difficult, but it is always worth it.

E. Loyalty – She needs to know you are committed.

Reassurance of your love on an ongoing basis energizes your wife. Your wife is a one-man woman. She is committed to you. She wants to know if you are indeed a one-woman man. Even if you mean it in a joking way, commenting about the attractiveness of another woman, even one on TV, is hurtful to her because she is insecure in this area.

Let’s look at the other side of the coin. Suppose your wife came home and said, “Did you know that John Smith down the road just got his third promotion? My friend who works in his office says people stop at his desk all the time to get his advice and counsel. The word is that he is a real man’s man. He runs marathons, lifts weights at the gym, and makes a lot of money. His wife says he is a great husband and father. When are you going to get in shape? Also, we could really use more money around here too.”

I think you get the point.

It is very difficult for a wife in this sex-happy, “swimsuit issue”, pornography-filled world.

Job 31:1 (New International Version 1984)

¹ *“I made a covenant with my eyes
not to look lustfully at a girl.*

When a wife knows her husband has made this kind of promise to God it makes her feel secure. When she is assured of her husband’s love and loyalty she is energized and motivated. God made her this way, and this is why marriage is based on loyalty. – until death do us part.

Song of Solomon 8:6 (New International Reader's Version)

⁶ *Hold me close to your heart like the seal around your neck.*

Keep me close to yourself like the ring on your finger.

My love for you is so strong it won't let you go.

Love is as powerful as death.

Love's jealousy is as strong as the grave.

Love is like a blazing fire.

It burns like a mighty flame.

The custom of giving each other a ring during your wedding ceremony captures the idea behind this verse. Some men do not wear their wedding ring because of their type of work, playing sports, or because they no longer fit. They can be put on when the safety issue is passed, and you can buy a new one if the old one no longer fits. A wedding ring is a sign of loyalty. No husband should leave home without one.

Also, never bring up the “D” word even in jest. The word *divorce* does not make your wife feel secure regardless of the context.

Proverbs 20:6 (New International Reader's Version)

⁶ *Many claim to have love that never fails.*

But who can find a faithful man?

The following scripture is a helpful reminder of how God feels about loyalty in marriage. In this passage the Lord is confronting the Israelites about breaking their marriage bonds so easily:

Malachi 2:14-16 (New King James Version)

Yet you say, “For what reason?” Because the LORD has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant.

But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.

“ For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one’s garment with violence,” Says the LORD of hosts. “ Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.”

I’m not trying to indicate that any of us are being treacherous with our wives, but it is never a waste of time to do some critical self-evaluation to see if we are being as loyal as we should be.

Here are a few things you can do to assure her of your loyalty:

1. Speak highly of her in front of others.
2. Don’t correct her in front of the children.
3. You correct your children if they are sassy or disrespectful to her.
4. You call and let her know your plans.
5. Keep your commitments.

F. Esteem – She wants you to honor and cherish her.

Proverbs 31:28-29 (New King James Version)

²⁸ *Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:*

²⁹ *“Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all.”*

God has made women so that they want to be esteemed, honored, and respected. The way to do this is to treasure her.

Your wife does not want to chair the relationship, but she does want to be first in importance to you. This is what Peter means by “show honor.”

1 Peter 3:7 (New King James Version)

⁷ Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

To esteem your wife means to have her on your mind and heart first and foremost. This causes her to want to respect you the way the church reverences Christ.

Sometimes your wife wants you to read her mind. We need to remind them that we do not have ESP; we have ESPN. Actually they don't really want us to read their minds, but to have paid close enough attention to them over time to know what they want without them having to tell us.

(Example of where to go out to eat on your anniversary.)

Remember, your love motivates her respect, and her respect motivates your love!

Thank her for all she does.

(Example of the wife and mother who didn't do what she normally does.)

Don't just esteem your wife for only what she does, but just for who she is.

(Example of woman whose sister was such a high achiever.)

VIII. C-H-A-I-R-S: How to Spell Respect to Your Husband

Wives do not need much help in being loving. It is something God built into them, and they do it naturally. However, even the best of wives could use some help with how to make their husbands feel respected. Showing a husband respect using the acronym of CHAIRS is a foreign language to many women and it can be a difficult concept to practice without some additional insight.

I believe when Paul commands husbands to love (agape – unconditionally love) their wives, it is implied that he is also commanding wives to unconditionally respect their husbands. Women might say that respect has to be earned. That may be true outside of the marriage relationship, but marriage is not 50-50, it is 100-0 both ways.

Giving unconditional respect to your husband helps greatly open the way for unconditional love from him.

The **CHAIRS** acronym stands for the six major values that your husband holds: Conquest, Hierarchy, Authority, Insight, Relationship, and Sexuality.

A. Conquest – Appreciate his desire to work and achieve.

A man has the natural inborn desire to go out and “conquer” the challenges of the world – to work and achieve. As a wife, if you can start to understand how important your husband's work is to him, you will come a long way in learning how to convey respect and honor to him which is in many ways even more important to him than your love.

The fact that a man values respect more than love is very hard for many women to grasp. God has made you to love, so you see things through the pink lenses that focus on love. Your husband does not operate exactly the same

way. This of course does not mean that your husband doesn't value love at all. Obviously he does more than words can express. But he spells love R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

Where does this tremendous drive in husbands to work and achieve come from? We go back to Genesis to see the first career assignment in history.

Genesis 2:15 (KJV)

¹⁵*And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.*

Before Eve was created, Adam was created, and God made him to work. There were no free handouts in the garden. The trees provided food, but Adam had to cultivate and keep them. However, God recognized that something was wrong. Adam needed a helpmeet (means literally "a help answering to him.").

1 Corinthians 11:9 (KJV)

⁹*Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.*

The feminist movement does not like these scriptures, but they cannot be so easily dismissed. From the very beginning man was called to work in the field. He has a deep need to be involved in conquest and adventure. It is not optional for him: it is a deep-seated trait put within him by God.

A Man's First Question: What Do You Do?

This is usually the first question one man will ask another after they meet. What do you do? Right or wrong most men identify themselves by their work. Watch little boys at play. They will pick up sticks and turn them into guns or tools. They will even reform their cheese sandwich into a pistol and shoot at their friends. Mothers need not become discouraged or exasperated because boys are called to be hunters, workers, doers, defenders. Men are created to work in the field to seek adventure and to conquer.

If as a wife if you are having trouble with this concept, think about how you want your future daughter-in-law to treat your son. He's going to have this need to work. I'm sure you will want his wife to support him just as your husband wants you to support him. If there is a difference, there shouldn't be.

Many women have no idea how important a man's work is to him. If a wife implies, unknowingly, that her husband's work is not that important, she has just called him a loser.

I read of a man who had built a very successful and profitable business and was then approached by someone who wanted to buy him out. The profit from the sale would leave him financially secure which would be a significant social honor to him. To him this was success. He came home and announced the good news to his wife. She, being preoccupied and distracted with some home and family issue said, "That's nice, dear." Her husband was crushed and vowed never to share anything with her again.

We don't endorse his decision, but a man can empathize with how he felt.

Let's put this in reverse. If a man's wife comes into the room where her husband is watching a ballgame on TV and announces she is pregnant. He responds, "That's nice, dear."

Do women want to have it all?

We are not saying that women have no desire to work. Women have always worked, but generally they worked at home with children nearby. In recent decades, women have proved that they are capable of going into the workaday world and holding significant positions and making great achievements. But when a wife goes out to work the

question remains, “Who will care for the children? The answer is day care, a solution which at best is not ideal and at worst can be harmful to the children.

It seems that in the western culture women want to have the choice to work outside or inside the home. It is wonderful to have that choice. However, most men do not feel they have that option and for the most part do not want it.

A woman marries for love not money, but she does want to make a “nest.” She wants to determine if her future husband can support her and the children should she choose to stay at home and care for her family there.

Let me be clear. Women can be called to positions of important leadership (see Judges 4:4), but I want to emphasize the incomparable worth of a mother to an infant. No amount of social engineering will make a man as effective as a woman in caring for an infant. It will not make daddy a “natural mother.” The “wiring” is just not the same.

There are exceptions in today’s culture, but for the typical woman, her primary desire is for home and family. Her husband’s primary desire is to go into the “field” and provide for his wife and children.

Have You Ever Said Thanks for Working?

Ladies there is something you can do to show respect for your husband’s desire for conquest. Write him a note that says, “Honey, thanks for getting up every day and working.” You can also add, “Thanks for giving me the opportunity to stay home with the kids. Your faithfulness to work allows me to do that. I really respect you for that.”

However, be careful that you don’t say how much you appreciate how much money he makes. He may not always make that much. If that is what he thinks you respect him for, he will feel as if he has failed you if something happens and he makes less.

He wants a woman who believes in him

In a marriage relationship, men do what they do for the admiration of other men but of only one woman. When you fell in love and he married you he felt that you believed in him and he appreciated that. It touched his spirit. This is something huge in the male.

You will notice early in a little boy’s life that he is always saying, “Hey, mom, watch me do this.” They are always performing for approval. Men are much the same way.

When you support and appreciate your husband, he will say that he has received “favor from the Lord.” (Prov. 18:22 NIRV)

Men want a woman who believes in them. There is a parallel here with Christ and the Church. Christ wants the Church to believe in Him.

When you fell in love and your husband married you he felt that you believed in him and he appreciated that maybe a lot more than you even realized. However, as the years went by his work started to conflict with marriage and family things. Maybe your past feelings of admiration were replaced by feelings of neglect.

All this is not to say that “workaholism” is not a problem for some men. It is in some cases. If he is a good-willed man you can talk to him about it. If he is interested in really loving you he will realize his problem and hopefully make some adjustments. Be careful to approach him from the perspective that you respect and admire his desire to work hard for you and your children, but you and the children have a deep need to see more of him.

B. Hierarchy – Appreciate His Desire to Protect and Provide

God has built into the man the desire to protect and provide for his family, and if necessary to die for them. There is tangible evidence of this in that billions of dollars are spent in the United States alone on life insurance mostly purchased by men who are husbands and fathers.

1 Timothy 5:8 (KJV)

⁸But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

What is the real meaning of “biblical hierarchy”?

Many women are so fearful of their husband’s headship that she overreacts by showing contempt. However, these women do not understand hierarchy from a biblical perspective.

Ephesians 5:22-24 (KJV)

²²Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. ²⁴Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be (submit) to their own husbands in everything.

The Greek word for submit is *hupotasso* which means to rank under or place under.

God is not giving some carte blanche label of “superior”; He is giving husbands a tremendous responsibility.

Ephesians 5:25-27 (KJV)

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ²⁶That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Here the responsibilities of being “head” are clearly spelled out. That is why the good-willed husband who understands this passage sees it as his duty to protect his wife. By the same token his wife is called to place herself under his protection. If she refuses to do that it is almost impossible to protect her.

Can this concept of biblical hierarchy lead to abuse? Will a man take advantage of being head to put down and even abuse his family? Yes, it is possible, but fear of that possible outcome should not cause a wife not to place herself under the care and protection of her husband. If a man is evil-willed, he will not need the excuse of biblical hierarchy to abuse his family. In those cases church discipline may be required. If a man is good-willed, his wife’s respect of his hierarchical position will not cause him to abuse but rather lovingly assume his proper responsibility to lay down his life for his family.

The Bible Vs the Current Culture

Most wives will say they want their husbands to be the head; they just want to know he has her needs in his heart. The problem many women have today is that they want to be treated as a queen, but they resist treating their husbands as the king. They want their husbands to be the head but not too much or too little but just right. It is the extremes they are worried about.

A wife shows respect for her husband when she in words and actions willingly places her life under her husband’s protection. In most cases he will not let her down.

How to deflate a husband

Tell him he needs to make more money, so you can have what someone else does. This will crush his spirit as fast as anything. Men see themselves as a covering over their families. The pink wife may not see heated discussions over finances as a putdown of her husband. However, her blue husband hears these comments from a hierarchical perspective and they sound belittling to him.

The card he'll keep forever

Send your husband a “respect” note, not a “love” note. Say something like, “I was just thinking about how you protect and take care of me. I was blown away when I thought you would even die for me if it was required.” Then sign it “with all my respect; I still admire you,

C. Authority – Appreciate His Desire to Serve and to Lead

Women want their husbands to lead. They just want them to make decisions in keeping with what they want.

This reminds me of the couple that got married and decided he would make all the major decisions and she would make all the minor decisions. After twenty years, he realized there had not been one major decision yet.

Many wives would tell you that they are better decision-makers than their husbands, and they often are. They may have better judgment than their husbands in many areas. Yet, they are stuck with this concept of being required to submit to their husbands.

There are wives who own and run their own business and struggle with this concept of submission to a husband who is not much of an encourager. The issue is really between her and God. She knows that her marriage would be much more peaceful if she could just lay it down. She can see it, she believes it, but she is not doing it.

In living this way, what is she teaching her daughter? No matter what she may say, more is caught than taught.

What about mutual submission?

Ephesians 5:22-23 (KJV)

²²*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.* ²³*For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body.*

1 Timothy 2:12 (KJV)

¹²*But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.*

To many people Paul seems hopelessly sexist as he penned these scriptures, especially to those wives who are married to domineering husbands. Some churches are starting to teach the concept of mutual submission referencing the following scripture:

Ephesians 5:21

²¹*Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*

According to this philosophy, the idea behind “mutual submission” as it applies in marriage is that the wife does not owe submission of any unique kind to her husband. If this is true it makes it hard to explain Ephesians 5:22, where wives are clearly told to “submit to your own husbands as to the Lord.”

The Greek word for submit is *hupotasso* which means to rank or place under. As a wife places herself under her husband's protection and provision there will obviously be times of conflict and disagreement. In the process of resolving these conflicts there is always opportunity for constructive submission to one another.

However, the rule of love and respect applies very appropriately in the area of conflict. A good-willed husband will convey love to his wife even in the context of a disagreement. He acknowledges her concerns and lets her know he hears and understands her concerns. He tries to incorporate her concerns in the final decision.

By the same token, the good-willed wife conveys her respect for her husband's desire and responsibility to protect and provide for her in spite of the unresolved issue.

He meets her need for love, and she meets his need for respect.

Note the following scriptures:

1 Peter 3:1 (NIV1984)

¹ Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives,

1 Peter 3:7 (NIV1984)

⁷ Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Husbands Are Responsible to “Make the Call”

So your question is if we have the “love and respect” thing going, which way does the decision go? Who makes the call? In reality in most case the conflict will be resolved to the satisfaction of both spouses. When love and respect are practiced spouses usually find a creative solution which resolves the conflict. There is much a husband and wife can do to “mutually submit” to one and another through love and respect. Husbands and wives process things far more wisely. They accept that a certain degree of conflict is normal in marriage. As a discussion progresses neither one overstates his or her position. They avoid exaggerations and personal attacks. They never use the statement “You always.....” There are offers and counteroffers. There is give and take.

But when someone has to make a final decision, the husband is responsible to do it. When Paul instructs wives to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord, he is saying that the husband has the responsibility that goes with that authority.

What a husband wants and needs is his wife's acknowledgement that he is the leader, the one in authority. This is not to grind his wife under or to treat her as inferior. It is only to say that God has made the husband responsible and in order to carry out that responsibility, he needs the corresponding authority. No smoothly running organization can have two heads. To set up a marriage with two having equal authority is to set it up for failure. Because God knew this, He called for the wife to defer to her husband.

Many wives feel that if they submit to their husbands it means burying their brains and becoming a doormat. Many wives are so focused on their own feelings and fears that they ignore the feelings and fears of their husband's. Ironically when a wife fears she will bury her brains, she creates in her husband the fear that he will be called brainless. When she fears being a doormat her husband begins to fear being walked on. Therefore, a husband gets stubborn and resists his wife's requests in order to send a message: “You aren't in charge of me.” If you acknowledge your husband's authority and his responsibility before God to even die for you if necessary, you will not be a doormat. In fact, you will get your way far more often than you would if you “stood up for your rights,” which usually means being disrespectful. In reality among good-willed couples, if there are 100 decisions made in a 3-month period relating to the family, the wife will have a strong opinion on 99 of them, and her opinion will be respected and have strong influence on the decision. Unfortunately, in many marriages either spouse may have

goodwill but not good sense. A husband can run roughshod, and a wife can come across forceful, coercive, and aggressive.

Many wives state that their husbands are too passive and disconnected when it comes to family matters. Why is he passive? It could be that when he tried to step up to the plate, his wife always seemed to have a better idea. After a while, he just let her have her way. If this could be the problem submission, respect, and quietness will engage your husband and draw him out. This does put the wife down. It actually helps create real equality. Remember, if a husband is acting in a domineering way, he is probably just trying to maintain control. His foolish reasoning tells him that if he maintains complete control, he will be respected. What happens is if a wife gives her husband the respect he is looking for, he will back off and be less controlling.

Trust me; God knows what He is doing.

Which Message Do You Want to Send?

Deferring to your husband is not always easy, especially if you don't believe he deserves your respect. It seems to be human nature for a wife to act in a disrespectful way to her husband to send him a message that she feels unloved. She thinks this will motivate her husband to love and appreciate her. She does this by being unsupportive of his endeavors, belittling his abilities, undermining his decisions, resistant to his counsel, unfriendly, and disinterested in sexual intimacy and thinking this will cause him to get the message that she is hurting, frustrated, and angry and that this will cause him to move toward her with understanding and love. In reality the opposite occurs. He will likely be so wounded that it may take him years to reopen to her emotionally.

Ultimately, refusal of a wife to submit to or respect her husband is in reality a refusal to trust God. If a wife believes that God is working in her life and the life of her husband and can place her life under that authority of God, then she can submit to respect her husband.

D. Insight – Appreciate His Desire to Analyze and Counsel

There is a widely held belief that women have an exclusive and unique power of intuition. God will speak to women in a way that He does not speak to men because they have blind spots. There is a significant degree of truth to this. But one, if not careful, can tip the scales too far in that direction. It is true that women do have a special gift of intuition and that husbands should listen to their wives. However, it is also true that women have blind spots too and need the insight of their husbands.

Believe it or not many men live their whole marriage in fear that they won't say or do something the 'right' way. If a wife always gives the impression that her way is always the right way, her husband may just shut down.

The wife who thinks she has to provide all the answers and do all the critical thinking should take a careful look at the Scripture.

Genesis 3:1-6 (NKJV)

¹ Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³ but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

1 Timothy 2:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ *And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.*

2 Corinthians 11:3 (NKJV)

³ *But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity^[a] that is in Christ.*

In the fall of man in the garden, Eve was deceived by the serpent. Adam was not deceived; he *disobeyed*, and through Adam the whole world fell into sin. Adam had the insight to realize that that he should not eat the fruit, but he went ahead and did so anyway. Apparently, Eve concluded that she knew far more about what was best for her and her husband, and she influenced him to follow her lead.

Genesis 3:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ *Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it':*

"Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life.

A Marriage Needs Her Intuition and His Insight

All this is not meant to be a put-down of women. Yes, men should listen to their wives who are naturally intuitive. But wives should not fail to appreciate the insight God has given to their husbands and therefore not discount their counsel.

Are wives taking over and becoming the primary voice in the marriage relationship in our current culture. Not necessarily, but the danger to do so is there.

Husbands and wives need each other.

Is it possible that as a wife you could be thinking too highly of your skills of discernment and intuition?

Is it possible that you may have been deceived on certain fronts and could benefit from your husband's insight because you don't see what he sees?

Are You Unhappy that Your Husband Is Not Taking On Spiritual Leadership in the Marriage?

Many wives voice complaints about the lack of spiritual leadership assumed by their husbands in the home. In many cases these concerns may be well founded, but if you are judging your husband with contempt, you are hurting God's heart. God is more concerned about your husband's lack of spiritual leadership in the home than you are, but a contemptuous, critical spirit is not the way to win over your "disobedient" husband to your convictions. God urges you to maintain "respectful" behavior toward your husband.

1 Peter 3:1-2 (NASB)

In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,² as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.

E. Relationship – Appreciate His Desire for Shoulder-To- Shoulder Friendship

Genesis 2:18 (NLT)

¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him."

(Relate account of the husband who asked his wife to come watch a ballgame with him on TV and made almost no conversation.)

Men communicate by sharing experiences. Women share experiences by talking about them to each other, blending in their impressions and emotions. Men share experiences by sharing an activity. This is what your husband wants to do with you. He wants a playmate.

Philippians 2:4 (NLT)

⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others (your husband), too.

Titus 2:3-4 New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)

³ Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. ⁴ Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children,

The Greek word for love in verse 4 is *phileo* which means brotherly or friendship love. Husbands need their wives to be friendly toward them.

One might ask husbands if their wives love them, and they would readily say yes; but if you ask them if their wives like them, many would say "No" or "I'm not sure." This may happen because husbands may have trouble living up to their wives' standards, and they become aware of that from the negative comments of their wives. Wives, let your husbands know that you not only love them but you like them also, even with all their faults and foibles.

Remember you liked each other when you got married. Be friendly after you are married.

Wives, Be Patient with Just Sit Beside Me

Note the following study:

In this study researchers performed a series of tests on males and females from four age groups: 2nd graders, 6th graders, 10th graders, and 25-year-olds. The instructions for each pair of females and each pair of males were the same: enter a room, sit down on two chairs, and talk if you wish.

As the test proceeded, each pair of females reacted the same way. They turned their chairs toward each other or at least turned toward each other so they could be face to face, lean forward, and talk. The males reacted differently. They did not turn towards each other in any way. They sat side by side, shoulder to shoulder, looking straight ahead except for an occasional glance at each other.

Men grow close by doing things together, shoulder to shoulder. Over time, these activities result in a sense of bonding. They don't focus on their relationships, and rarely talk about how they feel toward each other. But they are there for each other.

A husband may say to his wife, "Hey, let's go do something together." Early on a wife may cooperate because they are friends. However, a few children and piles of laundry seem to present more important things to do than going fly fishing or just hanging out. Besides, if they do have time to be together, she wants to talk. To her, talking is a way to connect. Being together without talking seems a waste of time.

This is where the give and take comes in. Just as men need to make time for face-to-face talking with their wives, so wives need to make time to be with their husbands shoulder to shoulder with little or no talking. You will see the energy flow to him.

F. S- Sexuality – Appreciate His Desire for Sexual Intimacy

Someone has said, just as the devil will do everything he can to bring two people together sexually before marriage, he does everything he can to keep them away from each other sexually after marriage.

If there was ever an issue that that isn't really the issue it is sex. When couples aren't getting along the problem lies in the fact that she wanted intimacy and affection without all the sexual touching, while he wanted sex and was not being too patient with moments of affection only.

Sex for him and affection for her is a two way street. Just as he should minister to your spirit to gain access to your body, you should minister to his body if you want to gain access to his spirit.

Women feel that sex is a man's number one need. Actually it is symbolic of his deeper need for respect.

Remember a wife needs emotional release through talking. When that need is met she feels loved. If her husband refuses her that way of being close, he communicates that he does not really love her or care about her need. A husband has a need for sexual release through physical intimacy. If his wife refuses him that release, he feels disrespected.

Wives need to think about how unfair it is for them to insist that their husbands only have eyes for them but regularly deny them sex.

Two Keys to Understanding Your Husband

There are two aspects to wives understanding their husband's sexually:

1. Realize that his sexuality is much different than yours.

Proverbs 5:19 (NIV1984)

¹⁹ *A loving doe, a graceful deer—
may her breasts satisfy you always,
may you ever be captivated by her love.*

There is not corresponding scripture that commands a woman to be satisfied by her husband's breasts at all times. That is a ridiculous statement, but why is it ridiculous?

Men are visually oriented. When they see a beautiful woman with a great figure he is stimulated. Women are not visually oriented when it comes to sex, at least not to the extent that men are. When a woman gets out of the shower, her husband is all eyes. When he gets out of the shower his wife tells him to step on the bath mat or she warns him to be careful because she just waxed the floor.

2. Your husband needs sexual release just as you need emotional release (non sexual intimacy).

1 Corinthians 7:5 (NIV1984)

⁵ *Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

When it comes to sexuality both husband and wife need to meet the other's needs. Men, especially can come under satanic attack when deprived of sexual intimacy. Wives might better understand this if they try to imagine what it would be like to go for weeks or months without having their husbands talk with them and listen to them.

The Golden Rule Works for Sex Too

Luke 6:31 (NIV1984)

³¹ *Do to others as you would have them do to you.*

A man's anatomy and design is much different from a woman's. He needs sexual release the same way she needs emotional release. This is why he loves the act of sex itself. It is pleasurable and brings him satisfaction. As a woman you may feel that you have to feel and be close in order to share sexually. For him the opposite is true. The sex act is what brings the two of you close.

The rule that never changes is: *You can't get what you want and need by depriving your partner of what they want and need.*