

Respect and Love, Part 1 of 2

by Harold & Bette Gillogly

Have you ever wondered why the Bible commands husbands to love their wives – and turns around and commands wives – not to love, but to respect their husbands? (Ephesians 5:33)

If you have been out and about lately you have probably heard of Dr. Emerson Eggerichs who wrote the book *Love and Respect*, and conducts Love and Respect Marriage Conferences around the country with his wife Sarah. Last month we had the privilege of hearing Dr. Eggerichs as he addressed a large crowd at the Smart Marriage Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. Since the conference was a mixture of secular and Christian attendees, the speakers were to speak to issues and not promote “religion.” Emerson had the crowd in the palm of his hand as he showed how men primarily need respect and women primarily need love. With many anecdotes and stories, he deftly established that premise without once referring to the Bible or Christ. At the end of his dramatic but humorous talk, he concluded: “And isn’t it amazing that over 2,000 years ago the Apostle Paul in the book of Ephesians wrote ‘husbands love your wives – and wives see that you respect your husbands’?” There was a collective, audible gasp from the crowd before they broke into loud applause.

We have been reviewing his book since and have decided to make our own observations about Love and Respect. Wives, this Seeds article is specifically addressed to you about respecting your husband – though, husbands, you can sneak a peek too. Don’t fret now, next month we’re coming back to you, husbands, about loving your wives.

Why is respect so important for a man?

A man and his work are practically inseparable! So much of his self worth is derived from his vocation. That is why the question men ask men when they first meet is: “What do you do?” Not “How are you doing?” Not “How’s your wife and kids?” Not “How do you feel about some social issue?” But rather, “What is your work, your vocation?”

Man was created to work. God gave Adam work to do in Eden even before He created Eve – he was to *tend and care for the garden* (Genesis 2:15 NLT). That is why a man gets so frustrated and discouraged when things are not going well at work. That is why many men work so hard to succeed that they become “workaholics” and even neglect their wives and children. A similar pride and honor are seen in the military where men will even lay down their lives for their comrades.

According to Dr. Eggerichs, men have a desire (1) to work and achieve, (2) to protect and provide, (3) to serve and lead, (4) to analyze and counsel, (5) to have shoulder-to-shoulder friendships and (6) to have sexual intimacy. If a wife fails to respect her husband in these areas, he will

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generally fail to show his wife adequate love. She then will not show respect and he, then, will not show love. Thus you have what Dr. Eggerichs calls the downward “Crazy Cycle.”

He contrasts this with the “Energizing Cycle.” When a wife respects her husband, it motivates him to show her love, which motivates her to show him respect, and thus you have a continuing energizing cycle. Now... who should take the first step? Dr. Eggerichs suggests that the mate who considers himself or herself to be the more mature take the first step to break out of the “Crazy Cycle” and enter the “Energizing Cycle.” Since there is plenty written about sacrificial love and how to show it, it is only fair that we should start this two part series with “wives see that you respect your husband” – there just isn’t much written about respect in today’s marriage literature.

How can wives show respect to their husbands?

Though Dr. Eggerichs gives many ways to show your husband respect, we thought we would list ten suggestions from our own experience:

1. **Speak highly of him and to him in public** – never put him down or make him the victim of your humor with others. For instance, making references to the fact that he isn’t making enough money (to do such and such) will humiliate him as an assault on his ability to adequately protect and provide for his family.
2. **Take care of yourself properly to look attractive for him.** Though you may not be able (who can?) to compete with all the images of beauty he is bombarded with in advertising, media etc., you definitely should “paint the wagon” as best you can. If you want him to “have eyes only for you,” make sure you don’t give him “sore eyes,” even though you may be wrestling with the kids all day long.
3. **Determine to be unified with him on childrearing practices.** Don’t fight him – rather reach agreement with him on what educational and discipline procedures you **both** will enforce. (Everybody wins with this suggestion.)
4. **Spend some time working with him,** even if you can’t really help in the work itself. Eggerichs speaks of shoulder-to-shoulder time when perhaps not a word is said, but your presence WITH him is unmistakable.
5. **Seek his advice and counsel.** Actually go to him with some problems you want him to help solve – not just when you want a sympathetic ear. Men shine as problem solvers. Let your husband shine on you.
6. **Write your husband a note** telling him how much you appreciate his perseverance at providing a living for his family. Note something specific about it such as getting up early each morning, traveling so far each week, working at a job he may not like very

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much, eating sack lunches when he'd rather eat out, etc.

7. **Find out your husband's love language** and shower him with it often. Gary Chapman's book, *The Five Love Languages*, can help with this. The five languages are: Words of affirmation, Touch, Gifts, Acts of service and Time. Which one does your husband need the most?
8. **Learn a little about his favorite sport or hobby** and participate or encourage him in it. Don't complain about the time he spends at it unless it's an inappropriate amount. Even then, don't just complain – talk calmly with him about it and the affect it is having on you and the family. Use "I" messages, not "You" messages.
9. **Find a way you can share with him together in ministry.** It may be in showing hospitality to others in your home, teaching together, going on a mission trip together, doing a service project together, etc. "We" ministry is a very powerful relationship builder.
10. **Initiate sex with him regularly** and enjoy giving him fulfillment. Don't leave it up to him to ask and ask and ask again. You really show your man honor and respect by willingly and joyfully tending to his needs in this area. Generally speaking, a satisfied man WANTS to show his woman that he cares for her in ways that speak love to her.

Now, you may be saying that he doesn't deserve this kind of respect, and that you will show him respect WHEN he shows you he really loves and cares for you. Dr. Eggerichs says, "You can't get what you need by depriving your partner of what your partner needs." So who is going to decide to be the mature one first?

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Respect must be unconditional.

We often speak of unconditional love. We accept it – believe it – we make sure husbands understand it! God commands that we love with no strings attached. What we haven't accepted or believed is that God commands wives to respect their husbands **unconditionally**. It's not that your husband doesn't need your love (see Titus 2:4) or that he isn't commanded to respect you (1 Peter 3:7) – rather it is about what you each need most. In fact, we are **all commanded to show respect to everyone** who asks us to give them a reason for the hope we have within us (1 Peter 3:15 – *But you must do this in a gentle and respectful way* – see also 1 Peter 2:17).

But what about the real difficult cases where the guy just continues to act unloving? Wives, unless there is abuse, addiction, affairs, criminal activity or

demanding that you violate your conscience, you can find reasons to respect him if you look for them. Check out Philippians 4:8 (NLT) where we are commanded: *And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.*

We are to "fix our thoughts" on what is positive, and think about those things. Even when the husband isn't a believer, 1 Peter 3:1,2 commands: *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, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.*

There is no conditional or IF clause in wives showing respect to their husbands. Try it! Dr. Eggerichs suggests giving your husband the "Respect Test." We recommend you try it and see the results. Say something to him like, "I was thinking about you today and thought of several things I really respect you for." Then wait. Or slowly leave the room, and see what he does. Most men will be eager to know what those "several things" are. He may even follow you out of the room just to hear more. So have something ready to share when he asks for them. Try it! You might be very **pleasantly surprised** with your husband's response.

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