

10 Godly Ways to Really Love a Woman

Note: This is an excerpt from my new book Man Alive. I wrote Man Alive because I'm tired of watching men go to events, get all amped up, charge out determined to do better, soar briefly, then glide (or crash) back to earth. In my experience these men are deeply frustrated that they can't sustain the change. It doesn't have to be that way.

So what's going on? There are seven primal needs that, when met God's way, can stop the spiritual roller coaster. If you know a man like that, or if that's you, order a copy of Man Alive today and let me walk you through a process to become "alive through Christ" (Eph 2:4-5). Or start a small group to discuss the questions at the end of each chapter.

No need is more primal than to love and be loved without reservation. I've been married to Patsy for 39 years and I love her more today than the day we married. I mentioned this to a single female lab tech yesterday and she wanted to know the "secret." I told her several practical ideas, but at the end I said, "We're Christians and each of us have given Jesus the first place in our lives. When Christ is first, everything else just seems to fall into place." I watched as comprehension slowly spread across her face.

Here are the 10 ten most practical marriage ideas I've picked up over four decades of working with men. Discuss these with your single men, too!

1. Pray with your wife – Shaun from Bozeman, Montana, asked his men's group, "How many of you pray with your wives?" Only one of the eight men said that he did. They started holding each other accountable. Here's what Shaun said about it a year later:

The benefits when we are obedient in this area are amazing. Here are some comments from the men about what happens when they pray with their wives on a consistent basis:

- “I feel a closeness to my wife that wasn’t there before.”
- “Communication between us is better.”
- “The petty things are just not a big deal anymore.”

And I’ll tell you this, it’s pretty hard to be upset with your wife or to be arguing and still come before God with a clean heart. It forces us to communicate and humble ourselves with each other before we do something as intimate as praying together. It just permeates through the rest of your family and day.

Ask your wife if you can take some time each day to pray together. Patsy and I always start the day with prayer for one to three minutes, and then we pray again when we’re together for dinner.

2. Pray for your wife – Not long ago I wrote a book called *The Marriage Prayer* with David Delk. The book is titled after a very specific sixty-eight-word prayer that we believe captures the essence of what the Bible teaches on marriage.

One day, a few months after I had started praying the marriage prayer myself, I was settled into my favorite chair and deep into a book when I saw Patsy walking by with the trash. I literally leaped out of my chair and said, “Here, let me get that for you.”

Immediately I stopped. *What just happened here*, I wondered, since I was pretty sure I had never done that before!

And then a phrase from the marriage prayer popped into my mind: “I want to hear her, cherish her and serve her—so she would love You more and we can bring You glory.”

This prayer has also been transforming for other men. One man said he started putting his empty Splenda packets in the trash instead of leaving them on the counter. You have to start somewhere.

Here's the whole marriage prayer:

*Father, I said, "Till death do us part"—I want to mean it.
Help me to love You more than her,
and her more than anyone or anything else.
Help me bring her into Your presence today.
Make us one, like You are three-in-one.
I want to hear her, cherish her and serve her
So she would love You more and
we can bring You glory. Amen.*

Think about this: you are likely the only person in the whole world who will remember to regularly pray for your mate. Tear out or copy this prayer, pray it every day for your wife, and watch God work. Learn more about the Marriage Prayer—including a version for a wife to pray—at .

3. Spend time with her alone. How we spend our time reveals what is really important to us. Successful couples spend time together. They develop shared interests, such as bowling, reading, hiking, Bible studies, board games or walking around the neighborhood. Patsy and I have always kept a weekly date night as a top priority.

Early in our marriage, I started hanging out at the table after dinner for about twenty minutes just to be with Patsy. We've done this for decades. A few years ago I also started rubbing her feet with lotion as we talk. I can guarantee you who she'll say is her best friend!

4. Listen to her deeply without giving an overly quick reply – Communication invariably shows up as the number one problem in marriage surveys. And the greatest weakness in communication with our mates is the problem of giving an overly quick reply.

We attach high value to our mates when we listen sincerely and patiently to each other. Listening deeply requires that we don't respond too quickly, don't criticize and don't give advice unless the other person asks for it. Everyone dreads being "fixed." Listening lubricates marriage and cuts down on friction.

5. Touch her – Successful couples touch each other. They hug, squeeze, embrace, pat, hold hands, put their arms around each other and sit close enough to touch when watching television. Nonsexual touching leads to genuine intimacy. Touching her is like recharging her battery.

6. Accept her unconditionally – Happy wives don't feel like they have to perform to be loved. They don't feel like they will be rejected if they don't meet a set of standards. For Pete's sake, if your wife has fat ankles, don't say something stupid like, "Why don't you do ankle exercises?" Jesus accepts each of us "just as I am," as the old hymn says, and smart mates accept each other as is, too. Intimacy means that I know who you are at the deepest level and I accept you.

7. Encourage her with words – Your mate has an emotional bank account into which you make deposits and from which you make withdrawals. If you're grumpy when you get home from work, you are making a withdrawal from her account. When you encourage your spouse when she feels down, you are making a deposit. Make sure to keep track of the account balance!

We all need to be lifted up when we feel blue, but the most successful couples go one step further—they create a positive environment. They verbally affirm each other at every opportunity. They try to catch each other doing things right. They pass along compliments others make about their mate. They never pass up an opportunity to express appreciation: "I love the way you fix your hair." "That was a great dinner." "I love having you for my wife." "Thank you for running such a smooth home."

Encouragement is the food of the heart, and every heart is a hungry heart.

8. Take care of her financially – Money problems create more stress on a marriage than any other outside threat. Here is the money issue in a nutshell: Is it right to spend so much on a lifestyle today that your wife would be forced into panic mode if you were not around anymore? Successful couples have resolved to live within their means. They do not live so high today that they fail to provide for retirement and premature death.

9. Laugh with her – The antidote to boredom in marriage is lively humor. If your partner says something even remotely funny, laugh! Keep track of what brings a smile to her face and what makes her laugh until her sides hurt. If neither one of you is funny, watch funny movies and make some funny friends.

10. After God, but before all others, make your wife your top priority – Once I called three friends to pray for a difficult challenge I faced the next day. One week later I called each of them to let them know how it turned out. “Oh yeah,” every one of them said, “I’ve been meaning to call you.”

Sure.

Men, you and your wife are the only two people who are really in this thing together. Everyone else will phase in and out of your lives—even your children. One day soon the party will be over and all your golfing buddies will have moved to Florida to live in little condominium pods and drive around on streets made for golf carts. And there will be only two rocking chairs sitting side by side. One for you, and one for her.

Doesn’t it make sense to invest today in the person who will be sitting next to you then? Be your wife’s best friend. {eoa}

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