

Did I Make the Grade in My Marriage Vows?

Once upon a time, Susan and I said two words that would forever change our lives: “I do.” Twenty-five years later, I’ve decided to look back on the promises I made to her on our wedding day and see how well I’ve done in keeping those vows.

But I didn’t just grade myself; I also asked Susan to independently grade me without any knowledge of how I graded myself. So, did I make straight As, just pass or utterly fail? Here are the results.

My wedding vows began with our pastor asking me a question, to which I gave a response:

“Mark, in Ephesians 5:25, the Lord has given us the responsibilities of a husband. It says, ‘Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy.’ Mark, do you vow to adhere to God’s wish for you as a husband?”

“I do.”

- My grade: B-
- Susan’s grade: B-

My comments: Christ didn’t just love His people when they were sweet, kind and loveable. He loved his people when they were cranky, unkind and unlovable. On one hand, I’ve found that I’ve done a pretty good job of loving Susan when she’s in a good mood and when she’s nice to me. Yet I haven’t done a good job of loving her when she doesn’t feel well, when she’s had a bad day or when she’s irritated with me. Looking to the future, I will strive to love her well in the moments when she’s unlovable.

Susan’s comments: Emotionally, Mark does a really great job of

loving me well. Yet Christ's love for the church was more disciplined than Mark's love for me.

"I will seek for our marriage to be one of understanding, compassion, sacrificial love and humility, both in times of happiness and in times of adversity."

- My grade: C+
- Susan's grade: C+

My comments: While I do a fairly good job in approaching our relationship with sacrificial love and humility, I consistently struggle in being understanding and compassionate. I often don't seek to understand how Susan is feeling about certain situations, and I certainly don't express a lot of compassion when I do know how she is feeling. In the future, I need to work on intentionally carving out time to ask more questions and then have the heart to listen to her answers.

Susan's comments: While Mark is able to wonderfully keep sacrificial love and humility at the center of our relationship, he has a hard time understanding me and being compassionate toward my feelings.

"My love is committed to you for as long as we both shall live."

- My grade: A+
- Susan's grade: A+

My comments: Susan will always be the one I love and the one I adore. My commitment to her is a lifelong one.

Susan's comments: Mark is completely devoted to our marriage and never keeps me guessing. I trust that he'll be by my side for the long run.

"A love, by God's grace, that will be patient and kind, without envy or boasting, pride or arrogance."

- My grade: B-
- Susan's grade: C+

My comments: My love is certainly not a love of envy or boasting, pride or arrogance. On the other hand, it's often not very patient and sometimes not even very kind. Patience is something I struggle with in all of my relationships—and my marriage is no exception. When I want something done, I want it done now. At the root of it, I'm learning that impatience and control go hand in hand. So in order to strengthen my patience in the future, it's important that I start letting go of trying to control my circumstances and control the way Susan reacts to me.

Susan's comments: I'd easily give Mark an A in not envying or boasting. However, his patience is something that constantly runs out too easily. Through the years, I've noticed that he's improved by becoming more patient in our marriage, yet he still sometimes struggles with a lack of kindness towards me.

"A love that will not be selfish or easily angered or keep a record of wrongs."

- My grade: B
- Susan's grade: B-

My comments: In our earlier years of marriage, I was angered more quickly and kept records in my mind of the ways I thought Susan messed up. But over the years I've learned to become a man who isn't so easily angered and who doesn't hold onto offenses against me. I'm also much less selfish than I was at the start of our marriage and continue to learn how to serve Susan better.

Susan's comments: Mark has become more of a servant in our relationship. And as I mentioned before, Mark has made great strides in being more patient, but sometimes his impatience with me rises up and can cause him to get frustrated and angry.

“A love that will delight in truth, always protecting, trusting, hoping and enduring.”

- My grade: A
- Susan's grade: A

My comments: I'm a truth warrior. It's always been important to me to seek the truth, speak the truth and delight in the truth. When it comes to our marriage, truth has played a huge role in allowing us to communicate well. In addition, I always strive to protect Susan in every way.

Susan's comments: Mark definitely does a wonderful job of putting our family first. I never have to worry that anything will come between us because I trust that he's all in.

“As your leader and head, I will nurture and cherish you as my own self, giving you the care, support and encouragement you need to help you fulfill your potential and be all the woman our Lord intended you to be.”

- My grade: C+
- Susan's grade: B+

My comments: I'm not naturally a nurturing kind of guy. I also need a lot of improvement in encouraging Susan. I've been a lot more intentional in recent years to affirm and encourage her more in everything that she does.

Susan's comments: You have been very supportive over the years in valuing the different gifts God has given me. I also love the way you always make sure I use those gifts to grow into the woman God intended me to be.

I encourage you to find the vows you once made to your spouse, read through them and maybe even grade yourself. Would you then share how you did with a comment below?

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