

How to Respect Your Husband Even When You Feel He Doesn't Deserve It

Love and Respect

Women long to be loved by their husbands. In all the years my husband and I have done biblical marriage counseling, we have seen that wives are often plagued with the question, "Does he love me as much as I love him?"

For the most part, women ache to know their husbands love them unconditionally. God created women to have this longing, which is why He instructed men, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5:25).

Over the years, I have learned to make myself vulnerable in asking Steve to help me feel loved by him. You may think this sounds needy—OK, call me needy. But I know how much I value being loved by my man, and I am willing to ask him from time to time to show me his love.

The Bible calls husbands to "live with your wives in an understanding way" (1 Pet. 3:7b, NASB). But let's be honest, ladies—we are a mystery. We aren't even sure what we want much of the time. Based on your hormones and many other variables, actions that say "I love you" today may not be what you need tomorrow. If your husband is going to live with you in an understanding way, it is your responsibility to gently coach him—for the rest of your life—how he can best show you his love.

For example, when I was younger, I really appreciated my husband's compliments about my appearance. If he failed to notice when I made an extra effort to look good, rather than

hinting or pouting until he noticed, I would say, “Hey, did you notice my new dress, hairstyle and so on?” When he responded with a compliment, I did not allow myself to think, *Oh yeah, now you say something, buddy. Maybe I’ll stop making the effort, and then we’ll see how long it takes you to notice.* I’m sure you’ll agree that response would be petty, but over the years I have mentored women, I’ve seen that kind of attitude surface frequently.

Now that I am older, I tell my husband how much more I need his kind affirmation. We joke about how merciful God is to cause our vision to diminish as we age so we see each other through blurred lenses that help to soften all our wrinkles.

And Just as Much as You Need to Feel Loved ...

Just as deeply as wives long to be loved without condition, husbands desire to receive unconditional respect from their wives. Again, God knew women did not need to be told to love their men—this comes naturally. But to respect them is another story. That’s why the Bible instructs, “Let the wife see that she respects her husband” (Eph. 5:33b).

Women tend to nurture and mother the people they care about. But your husband does not need a mom. He wants a wife who believes in him, relies on him and celebrates his accomplishments.

When a man feels disrespected by his wife, he tends to pull away and not show her the love she craves. And when a woman does not feel loved, she will respond by disrespecting her husband. In his book *Love and Respect*, Dr. Emerson Eggerichs calls this the “Crazy Cycle.” He says, “The Love and Respect Connection is the key to any problem in a marriage ... How the need for love and the need for respect play off of one another in a marriage has *everything* to do with the kind of marriage you will have.”

‘But He Doesn’t Deserve My Respect’

I completely understand a woman's resistance to showing respect to a man who has not earned it. We already talked about how hard it is for a wife to respect her husband if he regularly looks at pornography. But just as God instructs a husband to love his wife whether she earns his love or not, God commands a wife to show respect to her husband without condition. Let's consider Dr. Eggerichs's insight into this matter:

A wife faces two choices. She can try to make personal adjustments and treat her husband respectfully according to what Scripture says, or she can continue with a sour look and a negative, disrespectful attitude ... To continue with disrespect only means shooting herself in both feet.

Learning to show your husband respect is vital to a healthy marriage. My husband and I have watched failing marriages be turned around when a wife determines to obey God's mandate to show respect to her husband.

Are you worried that if you show respect, your husband will "get his way" when conflict arises? Or are you afraid your respectful manner will lessen your chances of motivating your husband to change? Listen to one woman's response to this: "If I step out in faith, claiming God's Word as the basis for my action, then I am trusting God to bring to pass what He said He would do. I can't go wrong with that! I've determined that is the path I am going to take no matter how unfamiliar it seems."

According to God's Word, showing respect to your husband is not optional. As you spend time in the Bible, ask God to help you focus on and express to your husband what you respect about him. And when you do, don't be surprised if your husband responds in a more loving manner. Because your husband needs to be respected by you, when you bless him with honor, he will come to view you as a treasure. And you will become your

husband's closest confidant, friend and encourager. Your respect will motivate your husband to attempt feats he might otherwise only dream about—because a man respected by his woman can accomplish great things! {eo}

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Stoppe is the author of *Moms Raising Sons to be Men*, which mentors thousands of moms to guide sons toward a no-regrets life, *If My Husband Would Change, I'd Be Happy & Other Myths Wives Believe*, helping countless women build no-regrets marriages and *Real-Life Romance*, a collection of real-life love stories. Her latest release is *The Marriage Mentor*, written with her husband, Steve.

This article has been excerpted from her Rhonda and Steve Stoppe's new book, *The Marriage Mentor*.