

What Your Husband Really Wants for Father's Day

Father's Day will be upon us in just a few days. And unlike Mother's Day, a truly deserved holiday in which children (finally) appreciate their moms for a year of sacrificial service, Father's Day is the one Sunday of the year where Dads feel justified in taking an afternoon nap. They may take one every Sunday of the year, but Father's Day is the one day we don't feel guilty about it.

The Father's Day gift is always a challenge. Ever since Old Spice stopped making the "Soap on a Rope," children the world over have had to actually work to think of something meaningful to give their dads. Encourage your kids to be creative and sentimental, but if the best you can come up with is another tie, we are OK with that. It's the thought that counts.

But beyond the little gift a child gives his or her father, what can a wife give to her husband? What does he need most from her? Not just on Father's Day, but every day. I have thought of at least four things your man cannot get enough of. Use these as a simple checklist to see how you are doing at meeting your husband's deepest needs.

1. Your Husband Wants Your Understanding

If your husband has even the slightest spiritual pulse, he feels the burden of responsibility of leading your family spiritually. He knows he should, he just doesn't know how to do it very well. After all, if he is like most men, his own father didn't model spiritual leadership for him. He doesn't have a clue.

What most women do not realize is that, because of the mantle of responsibility that God has placed upon husbands, the

spiritual attacks on a man are often far more substantive than those on wives. Rob Rienow describes the family as a bunch of high-speed bicycles in a race, drafting behind one another in a pack. The husband is in the lead, taking the brunt force of the wind, while his wife and kids draft behind him.

Understanding this reality can serve to make a wife more patient and more supportive of his leadership, even if it seems like his head isn't always in the game. Please know that we feel the burden of fatherhood in most every breath that we breathe. It rarely leaves our minds.

2. Your Husband Wants Your Affirmation

If a wife understands that her husband is under constant attack, she is more likely to understand his powerful need from affirmation from her. Back to the racing bikes analogy, it is very easy for the wife to be easily drafting behind her husband, all the while complaining that he's not pedaling hard enough. "Pick up the pace!" she might yell. "Why are you struggling so much? This isn't that hard!" Instead, if she realizes that he has the weight of the family on his shoulders, she is much more likely to affirm him and build him up. When she does so, she will discover the power it has to make him come alive.

Jenifer and I have taught many times on a husband's need for affirmation and respect from his wife and I am still amazed at looks on the women's faces. It's like Paul on the road to Damascus, with "scales falling off their eyes." Hear this from a man: There is no more powerful a motivator in my life than the affirmation of my wife. This is true for just about every man I have known.

The last time we taught this to women, I used illustrations from powerfully romantic movies that women could relate to: *Rocky*, *Cinderella Man* and *Saving Private Ryan*. Now, I know what you're thinking: Those movies aren't romantic. But ask

any man what the most powerful moments are in each of those films, and he will probably mention not the time when the hero conquered his enemy, but the moment just before or after it—that emotional, empowering moment when the hero's woman says "I believe in you. I'm proud of you." That will get his eyes misting up every time. Ladies, you have no idea the power you have over us in this area. In big and little things, your affirmation is literally the air we breathe.

3. Your Husband Wants Your Followship

I'm not sure "followship" is a word, but I know that your husband needs you to follow his leadership. So it will have to do.

I have a long-standing theory: Most Christian women want their husbands to lead them, but only if the husband leads in the way the wife wants him to. If and when he leads in a way that she doesn't deem best or right, she resists his leadership. She questions his judgment. Then, she complains that he won't lead.

You can't have it both ways. If you want him to lead you, you must be willing to follow him. You might not always like it, but there is no better way to shut him down than to question, doubt and nit-pick his decisions. I'm not suggesting that a wife become a doormat. Absolutely not. Even the most bone-headed husband values his wife's perspective. But there's a big difference between talking things through and undermining his leadership at every turn.

Respect and follow his leadership, ladies. He desperately needs this from you.

4. Your Husband Wants Your Prayers

Finally, your man needs your prayers more than anything else. Nothing will give him more confidence and more inspiration as a man and as a spiritual leader than the constant reminder

that you are praying for him. And get specific: Tell him exactly what you are praying for him. (Hopefully this goes without saying, but please don't just spiritualize a "nag," as in: "I'm praying you'll quit being a deadbeat husband.")

I could expand on this some more, but you know it's true. It will accomplish nothing for me to tell you that interceding for your husband is important. You just need to believe that it's true, find delight in doing it and get busy praying. That's a truth for husbands as well. God wants to meet us in our deepest needs and give us direction for facing the challenges of our everyday lives. Nothing facilitates that better than aligning our hearts and minds with His in prayer.

I encourage you to run this post past your husband to get his opinion on what I have said. If I'm way off-base, then accept my profound apologies. But I don't think I am. A consistent dose of these four things would make the best Father's Day gift a wife could possibly give to her husband.

And they will be appreciated and valued long after the tie goes out of style.

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