

# APPENDIX IV

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## DOES EPHESIANS 5:21 SAY WIVES DON'T HAVE TO SUBMIT TO HUSBANDS?

Contrary to what some teachers and leaders in the church espouse, Ephesians 5:21—"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (NIV)—does not "cancel out" Ephesians 5:22, where wives are instructed to "submit to your husbands as to the Lord" (NIV). In Chapter Seventeen of *Love & Respect*, I pointed out that the Greek word translated "submit" is *hupotasso*. Literally, this is a compound word meaning to rank under or place under. In Ephesians 5:23–24, Paul explains why a wife is to "rank under" or "place herself under" her husband: "For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. . . . Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything" (NIV). Paul is simply saying that as Christ has authority over the church, so the husband has authority over his wife. But most importantly, the husband's authority is to be motivated by love and is based on his responsibility to be a Christ-figure. As Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, the husband is to be willing to die for his wife if necessary (see Ephesians 5:25–29).

Because God has given the husband primary responsibility, He has also given him primary authority. Nowhere in Ephesians 5 is the wife called to be the head of her husband. Nor is the wife called upon to be the Christ-figure dying for her husband. This kind of "mutuality" does not exist in the text. In summary, any teaching on "mutual submission" should never negate the fact that Scripture clearly and ultimately calls the wife to defer to her husband's God-given authority and responsibility. If a wife protests, saying, "We are equal; we are to submit equally to one another," she will hurt and frustrate her husband. Few things are as demeaning and disrespectful to a husband as denying or ignoring his primary responsibility before God. Those who seek to be

politically correct might scoff, “Who cares how a man feels? He needs to get over it!” A wise wife, however, not only cares about how her good-willed husband feels, she understands this is how God created him, and she seeks to help him with his awesome task of leading and protecting her. Thus, she places herself under his authority and enjoys his protection.

Having said all this, we must note that while the husband has the greater general authority, his wife is not without specific authority in at least two areas. First, Scripture teaches that the husband is to submit to his wife’s sexual authority. In 1 Corinthians 7:4, Paul writes, “The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.” Half the time, so to speak, in the sexual realm (and this is a colossal realm!) the wife has authority over her husband’s body. At those times the husband must submit to his wife’s God-given authority, right, or need. For example, for a change she may need him sexually, and he should submit to her request to be sexually intimate. Or, she may be exhausted from a horrific day caring for sick kids and prefers to abstain from sex, at least that night. The loving husband must submit to his wife’s request.

But doesn’t 1 Corinthians 7:4 also say the husband has authority over his wife in the sexual realm? Clearly, it does, so how can this be worked out if both spouses have equal authority over the other’s body? I believe Scripture is calling both spouses to mutually submit to the other’s authority and need! Because both have equal authority, both must mutually submit. Is this a mystical idea that is impossible to apply? A simple explanation is to strike a balance (find a happy medium). An important point to grasp about mutual sexual submission is that it does not always have to be simultaneous. Work out a way you can “give preference to one another in honor” (Romans 12:10). The couple practicing Love and Respect can agree on a sexual pattern that is mutually acceptable to both of them. Paul leaves each couple to work out 1 Corinthians 7:4 in their own way, doing so with the confidence that God will guide both spouses in this area of mutual submission.

Does this mean there won’t be times of tension or disagreement when an agreed upon pattern doesn’t work out? No—but a good thing to keep in mind is that in Ephesians 5:21 Paul instructs husbands and wives to submit to each other “*out of reverence for Christ*” (NIV, italics mine). You aren’t playing some kind of game of marital *quid pro quo*. You are using your marriage as a practical laboratory for living out your reverence

for Christ. In the midst of the tension there is always a Third Party who can be trusted to give you help. Because you try to reverence Christ, He is there to get you through the tough times.

For example, I once counseled a husband who felt he was being deprived sexually. His wife seemed repulsed by the idea of having sex on a regular basis, and this had become a huge problem for them. I advised him to trust and reverence the Lord in the midst of his frustration and to seek to consistently love his wife as a person, even if she didn't always respond sexually. It is amazing what prayer and love can do! Their sexual intimacy is now better than ever. The husband, a medical doctor, truly sees God's hand in what has happened. You can too, if you reverence Him when you are feeling disrespected or unloved.

A second way a husband submits is indirectly stated in Ephesians 5:33, the passage on which *Love & Respect* is based: "... each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband" (NIV). I have learned in my marriage to Sarah that loving her isn't always convenient or easy, especially when I feel disrespected. So, in order to love Sarah at such times, I must choose to submit to Sarah's need to be loved. In that way, I show my submission to God's command and my reverence for Christ. And in the same way, respecting me isn't always easy for Sarah, especially when she feels unloved! In order to respect me at such times, she must choose to submit to my need to be respected. When she shows me respect, she shows her submission to God's command and her reverence for Christ.

Because Paul commands us to be subject to one another in Ephesians 5:21, and then in the immediate context he teaches husbands to love and wives to respect, I believe love and respect are part of mutual submission. I also believe that, outside the bedroom, mutual submission can and should happen simultaneously. In all other situations in marriage, we can simultaneously submit to each other's need to feel loved or respected. For example, during a serious disagreement Sarah and I can mutually submit by giving each other love or respect even though we remain at loggerheads about the decision over, let's say, buying a security system for our home versus increasing our health insurance. She wants the system; I want the insurance. When I truly seek to meet Sarah's need to feel loved, even while we are arguing in favor of our own position, the "conflict" does not escalate to hostility. In this case, even though I defer 90 percent of the time to what my wife wants for our home, I feel I have to go with the health insurance, where our coverage is dangerously low at some points. But in

making my decision I am still called to submit to Sarah's need to feel loved; I don't have to be hateful as I make my choice. By the same token, Sarah does not close off her spirit. She respects my decision and me, even though she is disappointed. (It turns out that a few months later we were able to buy the security system anyway, so we were both happy.)

Admittedly, I have used a situation where everything came out nicely in the end. You may be saying, "That's fine for you, Emerson, but with my husband and me, I would want the security system and he would want a new set of golf clubs. According to your thinking, he gets his clubs and we get no security system, even though crime is going up in our town every month. I have to live with his bad decision, and that is just not right." My answer is that I have counseled many wives who have had to live with bad decisions by their husbands. In fact, Sarah has had to live with a number of mine. I am not saying that submitting to a bad decision is easy, but in the long run it will pay off. I have seen many wives override their husbands again and again with a disrespectful attitude. Finally the continual disrespect gets to these husbands. They say to their wives, "Fine, you take over; have it your way"—and they retreat into being uninvolved and passive. Later, their wives come to me and say they can't understand why their husbands aren't more involved with them on much of anything. There is no connection, no intimacy—he is just "out of it."

My point is that some bad decisions need to go the husband's way. If the wife submits and is quiet (not cold, complaining, or bitter), she has a better platform for making her case next time. What I have seen with thousands of couples is that a good-willed husband seldom ignores his wife's reasoned, respectful appeals on a continual basis. When a wife respectfully and calmly presents her position to her husband, he will seldom take issue with her motherly and womanly desires.

I believe the real issue is not with male dominance and bad decision-making, resulting in harm to wives. Yes, that can happen, but it does not happen that often among good-willed couples. The real issue is with female dominance and passive, angry husbands. What I am trying to get across to wives, and husbands, is that hierarchy and authority are not teachings designed to keep the wife in subjection, treated like a doormat. Instead, if the wife submits respectfully, it motivates the husband to stay engaged in the awesome task of leading his home on all fronts, including being the spiritual leader, which is the deepest longing of the wife. The problem isn't with a husband denying the rights of his wife. The problem that I have seen in many

marriages is with the husband backing away from being responsible when his wife refuses to submit. When a wife does respectfully submit, a husband is much more likely to step up to the plate and be the leader she hopes and prays for. He may strike out now and then, but he is in the game. In fact they are in the game together, living out love and respect.

# APPENDIX V

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## SEX: LOVE AND RESPECT FIRST—THEN, “JUST DO IT!”

Our Lord created sex to be holy and enjoyed. The Bible makes this clear in the Song of Solomon, which paints a picture of married love with sexual and romantic metaphors in the brightest of colors! God has never shied away from encouraging “eros” in marriage.

Although God designed sex for husbands and wives to draw closer, I have noted over many years of counseling experience that many couples clam up when the subject of sex comes up. And when I address sexuality at a marriage conference, a hush literally falls over the crowd. (It always makes me think of Christmas Eve: “Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse!”) The topic of sex makes many, if not most, people self-conscious. It is a very personal issue, which just freezes a lot of us, male or female.

Let’s cut to the bedroom, where a typical “discussion” is taking place regarding sex. In one way or another, the husband is saying, “I know you want affection, but right now, I need to make love with you . . . BAD.” To which the wife responds, in so many words, “(Sigh) All right, you can have your sex, but it’s no fun for me, and I better get something out of it, or I’m likely to have chronic headaches.”

Of course, many such discussions never get that far. She may just say “NO!” and that’s the end of sex and the beginning of three days of stonewalling. Wanting (or not wanting, as the case may be) sex often leads to behavior and words that are unloving, disrespectful, manipulative, or self-serving.

It need not be.

There is a way to move forward, not necessarily to sexual nirvana, but to something that might be called “heaven on earth,” at least compared to what many couples have now. How do you do it? The Love and Respect message calls on both of you to believe

in the other's good will. Yes, I know you know my definition of "good will"—not really wanting to harm your mate in the long run. But sex is a short-run issue (at least for many husbands). Stick with me and I will show you how good will can help solve sexual stalemates. Here is my advice—first for husbands, then for wives:

As the husband, if you feel deprived sexually, you must not allow yourself to feel powerless and angry because you feel rejected. Instead, trust that while it doesn't seem like it, your wife does have good will toward you. Do not automatically conclude that she is disinterested in sex because she is mean-spirited and intends to punish you. Yes, she is angrily denying you at times, but this isn't necessarily the deepest desire of her heart. Realize the problem is more about her lack of sexual desire, which might be caused in part because she is hurt by how angry you have gotten when she refuses you. She may need help to reopen her heart to address her sexuality and her relationship to you, her husband. This may be the time to seek counsel from a godly, wise counselor who is competent to give you both advice about sex.

Whether or not you think a counselor is needed, this is a significant moment to let go of your negative beliefs about your wife. Her lack of sexual desire may have little to do with you. Seek her forgiveness for getting angry in the past as a way of "motivating" her to meet your sexual needs. Let her know you want to approach the problem differently, with the goal of creating mutual understanding.

As a wife, if you do have less sexual desire, one thing you should do is become aware of the message you are sending your husband: "Have eyes for me only, but don't touch me sexually—at least not very often. You can come close emotionally, but that's all. And as you stay away sexually, make sure, Buster, you stay faithful to me." What does his kind of message do to a husband? At best it hurts so deeply it can be devastating. At worst, it can drive him into another woman's waiting and willing arms.

At this point, I will make a significant qualification about what I have been saying concerning the sexual needs of men and women. So far I have pictured the husband as the one who needs sex and the wife as the one who often is not interested. I am well aware that many wives need sex more than their husbands. I have had many women tell me just that. The problem I have been addressing (he wants it; she doesn't) is what I see far more often than not. I am speaking about this subject in general terms. Twenty years of counseling experience convinces me it is safe to say, for every marriage where "the wife wants it and he doesn't," there are many more marriages where the reverse is true.

Having said this, I am insistent that couples look to (and believe) 1 Corinthians 7:3, where Paul clearly teaches that husband and wife must seek to meet each other's sexual needs. How does that happen? First, both spouses must ask, "Is it okay that God has created my mate to have a need I don't have, or at least not in the same way?" The wife must learn to ask, "Is it okay that my husband has a greater need for sex than I do?" The husband must learn to ask, "Is it okay that my wife has a greater need for affection and emotional connecting than she does for sex?"

If you both can say yes to those questions, that's a big first step toward sexual maturity. The mature husband realizes his wife has a need for affection in and of itself and he chooses to meet her need, even though he doesn't understand it completely. And the mature wife realizes that her husband did not ask to be created with an anatomy that needs sexual release on a regular basis. She chooses to meet that need, even though she does not understand it completely. Both of them realize that although God made husband and wife with needs that are equal in importance, He did not make them with needs that are the same in kind.

So far so good. Now, I have something more—something extremely important—to say to husbands. Yes, I realize you feel deprived, but a reminder is in order. If you neglect (or don't give much thought to) being close to your wife, open with your wife, understanding of your wife, at peace with your wife, loyal to your wife, or esteeming of your wife (C-O-U-P-L-E), you are shooting yourself in the foot. If you refuse her all these things I just listed to "teach her a lesson"—that she cannot deprive you sexually—you have shot yourself in the other foot. You have sent her the wrong message, and she will not hear your heart. She won't hear you trying to say, "Please respect my need for sex." All she will hear is, "I don't love you; I just want to use you." Bottom line: if you want to move forward to help your wife understand your sexual needs, you cannot deprive her of her emotional needs. By way of analogy, she cannot put her ear to your chest and listen to the deepest beat of your heart if you are figuratively screaming at the top of your lungs and banging her on the head. Some approaches just don't work.

Husbands, remember: God has designed your wife to nurture and empathize. When you share your sexual need in a reasonable, loving (and yes, respectful) way, most wives want to help. But you have to approach her humbly and honestly. You cannot mask your sexual need behind hostility and threats and expect her to decode your sexual pain. The typical good-willed wife knows her husband has this sexual need, and she isn't consciously trying to put her husband in a sex-starved state.

Then why, the husband is surely asking, do I get so little sex? In all probability, your wife isn't responding because you have not been consistently gentle and meek in this matter of sex. (For men who think "meek" is for sissies, remember Moses was called "meek" and he was no sissy [see Numbers 12:3 KJV].) In other words, you are not predictably tender with her as you share your need. Oh, you may be sweet and patient for a while, but then you explode with frustration and anger. This is the real problem: your inconsistent approach to her emotionally, which leads to the explosions. It is not her "evil will" to make you suffer. Your inconsistency sets you back each time. Patiently and consistently practice C-O-U-P-L-E and see what happens with your good-willed life. (In fact, ask her if what I am saying is not true for her.)

Most wives want to connect emotionally and sexually with their husbands, but God did not design them to drool every time they have a thought about sex. The husband needs to see how God has designed his wife. Women are sexual beings, but there are moments during the month when they feel less sexual than others. Nonetheless, I believe the typical couple can enjoy a healthy and satisfying sexual relationship throughout most of the month, because God has created male and female to mutually satisfy each other (see 1 Corinthians 7:3).

Look at it this way: as a husband you can try to be close, open, and understanding but you won't satisfy your wife emotionally 100 percent of the time. Wives who think their husbands must satisfy their every emotional need all of the time must let go of unrealistic expectations. (For example, what man is able to discuss relationships, the needs of children, emotional feelings . . . in the same way a woman can?) The wife must let go of her dreams of what went on in Paradise before the Fall. Nonetheless, I do believe any husband can respond to his wife's emotional needs up to 80 percent of the time.

The 80 percent rule also holds for wives. A wife isn't going to "perform" sexually at the 100 percent level of a typical man's imagination. No wife is going to be available as he imagines Eve must have been available in the days before fig leaves. Nonetheless, I believe any wife can respond to her husband's needs up to 80 percent of the time. When a wife feels genuinely and consistently loved by her husband, she will respond sexually. And when a husband fails to be loving (and all husbands do from time to time), he must always remember to say, "Honey, I am truly sorry. Will you forgive me for being unloving?" When the typical wife hears that from her husband, it makes her melt, and puts her in a far better state of mind to be approached about sex.

Please know that I realize it isn't always as simple as I describe. As I talk about C-O-U-P-L-E principles I am not trying to give husbands six "new and improved sex toys" to lure their wives into bed. I am trying to give husbands pure and simple wisdom that will lead to a mutually satisfying sex life and a mutually satisfying emotional connection. Recent research in sex and marriage is bringing out some interesting information. Regarding the sex act, the traditional view has been: desire for sex leads to sexual arousal, which leads to orgasm (desire, arousal, orgasm). This sequence is still true for many. Today, however, some of the best research finds something different is true for the person with lesser sexual desire. Instead of waiting for sexual desire to surface, one chooses to enter into the act of sex and then the desire comes. This new view, which works for many, says: make a decision to have sex, which leads to arousal, which then leads to desire (sex, arousal, desire). The general idea is that desire for sex increases after one chooses to be sexual with one's spouse.

Stealing a line from the Nike commercial, sex specialists are calling on couples to "Just Do It!" Encouragingly, after "just doing it" those with lesser sexual desire are finding a wonderful change in their marriage and in improving personal sexual desires.<sup>i</sup>

The "Just Do It!" approach to sex reminds me of what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:3: "The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband." I know the word "duty" makes it sound like sex is some kind of required obligation devoid of joy, but not so. The truth is, as we seek to do our "duty" out of love for each other and reverence for God, good things happen. It may seem like a meaningless duty to meet the emotional needs of a wife, but, oh, the pleasure this brings her! When a husband meets her needs, the typical wife in turn responds to her husband and both are happy. It may seem like a meaningless duty to meet the sexual needs of a husband, but, oh, the pleasure this brings him! When a wife meets his need, the typical husband responds to his wife and both are happy.

Again, I know it isn't always just as simple as finding some new research and a new approach, but as I say in *Love & Respect*, when it comes to conflict about sex, "the issue isn't the issue." The real issue is love for her, respect for him. Seek that together and sex will be a fantastic part of your total life as husband and wife.

<sup>i</sup> R. Basson, "Using a Different Model for Female Sexual Response to Address Women's Problematic Low Sexual Desire," *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*, 2001, 27:295–403.

# APPENDIX VI

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## EMERSON'S ADDITIONAL COMMENTARY

### Session 1, Question 5

Some couples think they are the only ones having trouble in their marriage and they begin to feel defeated. In the face of this trouble one of the spouses may declare: 'I married the wrong person?' Be assured that marital troubles happen to everyone, everywhere. It is what is called a 'global experience,' so no husband or wife should feel alone or abnormal when trouble, big or small, hits the marriage. Actually, knowing that millions of married couples are in the same boat can become a source of encouragement. This kind of 'negative encouragement' can actually lighten the heart.

For example, a captain may tell his crew a bad storm is coming, and while this is not positive news, it prepares his sailors to remain inwardly calm and roll with the waves. The sailors can say to themselves, "Millions of other sailors have made it through bad storms and we can too." The same truth holds for marriage. The husband and wife can say, "Millions of couples have had marital troubles and made it, and we can make it too."

For excellent advice on how to deal with trouble in your marriage, look at Paul's general instruction in Ephesians 4:26: "Be angry, and yet do not sin." Paul is recognizing anger as a normal and (in some cases) correct emotion to have. But he also puts in a note of caution. Too much anger, or the wrong kind, can be sinful. In other words, "righteous anger" can become unrighteous, especially in a marriage. Just because my wife, Sarah, gets angry with me does not mean she is sinning and that I have a bad marriage. I cannot assume that I made a mistake in marrying this woman and start thinking that another woman would appreciate me and be more understanding and romantic. It could well be her anger is justified, and I need to be repentant and teachable because God is using her to correct me. If her anger is based on a misunderstanding, I need to be

patient and try to clarify the issue. Do I want to go through all this trouble? No. But is this just the kind of trouble God told me would come? Yes. Should I conclude that I married the wrong person because she is angry with me? No. Should I realize this is part and parcel of normal marriage and be encouraged? Yes! I do not rejoice in the trouble we may be having, but I continually rejoice in the hope that God will make a way where there seems to be no way.

### Session 1, Question 11

How Paul uses the Greek language in Ephesians 5:33 is extremely revealing and very important. Simply stated, when he uses the Greek words for love (*agape*) and respect (*phobetai*) he puts both expressions in the imperative mood. The imperative mood always means a command is being given. Clearly, God is giving a command to both the husband and the wife. That is why the New International Version, one of the best of the newer translations, leaves no doubt. The husband “must love his wife . . . and the wife must respect her husband” (Ephesians 5:33 NIV).

Sadly, however, some have interpreted Ephesians 5:33 to mean that the wife’s respect for her husband can be conditional. She need only show respect for him after she feels loved. If, in her eyes, he has not been loving enough she may feel justified in ignoring God’s command to her in Ephesians 5:33b. I have had many wives tell me, “If he loves me first, I’ll respect him. If he does not love me in the way I want, it is foolish to show him respect.”

What is so disturbing is that these wives are not trying to be mean or willful, just honest and sincere. But they might as well take a pair of scissors and cut Ephesians 5:33b out of their Bibles. What would we think of a husband who declares, “Lord, I do have to obey Your commands to love my wife until she is lovable and triggers feelings of love in me”? The bottom line is very clear: just as a husband is commanded to love his wife even if she is not as lovable as he would like, so a wife is commanded to respect her husband, even if he is not as loving as she wants him to be.

### Session 2, Question 7

In “The Tenth Anniversary Card” story, the encoded message sent by the wife in her angry response to getting a birthday card on her anniversary was, in so many words, “If you really loved me, you wouldn’t foul up like this!” When the husband responded defensively (and unlovingly), his encoded message was: “Hey, don’t get so angry with

me. My heart was in the right place. Your disrespect is devastating me!" (Note: the typical husband does not always think consciously about being disrespected. He probably isn't aware of his need to feel respected, or if he is consciously aware, he feels uncomfortable voicing his need to his wife. Whatever his state of mind, the point is that deep down he feels disrespect.)

In the "All You Want Me for Is Sex" story, there are several encoded messages. When the husband walks in after a week on the road, hoping for a big kiss, his wife lets fly with everything that is on her mind. She is buried in details, crises, things to be done. ~~She~~ needs his reassurance that he loves and understands her, and to hear "How can I help?" Instead, he feels disrespect and sends his own encoded message with a bit of sarcasm for flavor: "Great to see you after a week!" Later that night in bed, when he attempts to be sexually intimate, his wife sends a short but simple encoded message: "Don't. I'm too tired." She could have used the timeless phrase, "I have a headache," but the real message was the same: "I don't feel loved, and you aren't getting any warm, intimate responses from me!"

More encoded messages follow: he rolls away, saying nothing, but the message is there: "Disrespected again! See if I give you any loving words at all." From her female perspective, she fires another code—"You're so insensitive!"—which is once again her way of saying, "I want you to love me, not sexually at the moment, but just hold me and care about the week of misery I've just gone through!"

From there the conversation heats up and real feelings surface. From his male perspective, the husband lets his wife know he didn't appreciate not getting any kind of "Welcome home" greeting as he walked in the door. Instead he heard a litany of what ~~sound~~ unded like complaints from a woman who seems to take for granted what he is going through for his family out there in the dog-eat-dog world. Feeling disrespected, he finally says, "Am I just a meal ticket to you?" In other words, "Don't you respect me at all?"

Feeling totally unloved, his wife unloads her frustration with another encoded message. He never asked her how she had been doing with the kids, the house, the school—*everything*. When he finally seems interested in her at all, it's for one thing. The husband is not cowed and sends his own encoded message in a short speech that lets her know he had been gone for a week (in other words, no sex for a week). He wasn't too pleased with no kiss (there were kisses once, earlier in their marriage) and

being asked why he had gotten home “so early.” He emphatically ends the conversation with: “Thanks. That makes my day.” Another bit of sarcastic code that simply means: “I am sick of all this disrespect! What’s the use?”

#### **Session 4, Question 8**

Although many husbands don’t seem to “get it” about how to love their wives correctly, a wife must ask herself three questions: “Is his heart in the right place? Am I judging him too severely? Could the real problem be my lack of genuine respect for him?” One wife wrote to tell me:

“My husband left me and refused to take my calls or pleas. He tried to love me for twenty-one years and finally my facial expressions, tones, and negative disrespectful behavior became too much for him to bear. He broke and told me I was mean and he was not going to let me treat him like that again. I was devastated and hounded him for months. . . . I didn’t know the damage I had already done the first month we were married [when I] removed my wedding ring and spat in his face, and many, many episodes after that for twenty more years.”

This woman’s letter is heartbreaking. The guy tried to love her for twenty-one years. He did “get it,” but her disrespect sent the message, “You don’t get it, stupid,” and it defeated him. This story graphically illustrates a key truth, which is framed best in this question: even if my spouse isn’t “getting it” as perfectly as I would like, will it help to criticize or to encourage him or her?

#### **Session 4, Question 14**

When a wife comes across as disrespectful to her husband, she thinks it’s like a “w<sup>w</sup>noodle” across her husband’s face, just annoying enough to get his attention and hear her real message: “I’m hurting. Please reassure me that you understand, value, and love me.” But if a man used the same kind of disrespect toward another man, it would be like a brick in the face! He can think of few men, if any, who talk to him in this way. Difficult as it may be at times, the man of honor must decode his wife’s words (which could be hitting as hard as any brick) and hear her real message, asking for his love.

#### **Session 6, Question 14**

Concerning answer *b*: don’t worry, there will be plenty to talk about, and as I say on page 153 of *Love & Respect*, husbands can just mostly listen.

Concerning answer *c*: don't let the "urgent" things that fill your day squeeze out the truly important. Understanding a wife means talking to a wife; you can find the time if you really want to. Sarah and I did.

Concerning answer *d*: of course understanding takes feelings, especially feelings of empathy. But to know what and how to feel, spouses need to talk. You and your spouse may want to schedule regular time to talk. For some couples, twenty minutes every evening is satisfactory. For others, an evening dinner or Saturday morning breakfast once a week works best. Work out your own schedule. The point is that talking is the means, understanding is the end.

### Session 7, Question 4

The more I studied Scripture, the more I saw 1 Corinthians 7:3–5 as a great illustration of how marriages can have trouble—actually trouble ordained by God, because He has wired male and female so differently. We might say that because God made you male and female, He created you to have conflict and intends that the two of you use the conflict to deepen your mutual understanding of one another. Is this fun to go through? No, it isn't, but you can trust that it is His will. Because you have conflict you are not outside of God's will, nor did you marry the wrong person. (See again 1 Corinthians 7:28!)

In 1 Corinthians 7:3–5, God lays down a basic truth for spouses: neither spouse has total authority over his or her body in the sexual area, because the other spouse has authority as well. Since Scripture gives both spouses "equal power" in making a sexual decision, they can and must work together to find a solution. So, how would a couple work out a possible conflict about having sex tonight as mentioned in the question above?

To those spouses studying this question together, I urge you to read page 158 of *Love & Respect* carefully, perhaps more than once. These paragraphs contain the "solution" to marital conflict.

### Session 10, Question 3

Obviously, for biblical hierarchy to be lived out in a love and respect fashion, it is necessary for a husband to operate from an attitude of good will—never wishing his wife and children any harm. But a good-willed man can be stubborn, proud, and prone to poor judgment from time to time. Being good-willed does not guarantee perfect, or

even competent, behavior on every occasion. Being the “head” is a difficult task, and a husband needs all the help he can get. Ideally, a wife is his willing helpmeet and he is willing to listen to her suggestions. If he resists her suggestions, another approach for the wife to take is Peter’s advice to enter quietness (see 1 Peter 3:1–4). This does not mean giving him the cold shoulder or pouting. It does mean withholding comments and criticisms, even though the wife is sure that what she has to say has much merit.

Withholding her comments can be extremely difficult for the typical wife who believes talking is the way to solve problems. One “extremely verbal” spouse had a husband who let her handle the money, then later he would criticize her for “doing it all wrong.” She tried to get him to talk about it (so she could argue her side vehemently), but he could never “find the right time.” Finally, with great difficulty, she tried just “being quiet,” and it worked! Slowly he changed, and the wife eventually wrote to me: “We are doing very, very well. My husband is transforming before my eyes. My being silent . . . [has] become a habit and I’ll eat my words, or choose my timing, or . . . just let it go . . . [and] now my husband has become a leader. A man that’s [sic] easy to admire and respect . . . and love.”

“Just being quiet” seems counterintuitive to many wives. They wonder how anything can be decided if there is no talking. God’s answer through 1 Peter 3:1 is: “. . . without a word. . . .” To a woman, this is absurd. Therefore, she must take God’s word for it by faith and use respectful silence for a season of time to try to break a husband’s bad habits and disobedience of God’s call to love his wife. Many wives have told me how well it works to use respectful silence on a good-willed husband. Remember, “good-willed” means that a husband means no harm in the ultimate sense, even though in the “immediate now” he can be acting pretty badly. What a verbal and aggressive wife must remember is that her husband may be acting badly due to his fear of her verbal skills and disrespect. Silence on her part gives him a chance to deal with her on more even terms. That is when he will let down his defenses and quite possibly change, as the husband described above changed.

### Session 10, Question 11

So, how does mutual-submission-even-though-the-husband-has-final-responsibility-and-authority work out in the daily stuff of life? If there is an honest stalemate between husband and wife that threatens to cause a real rift, the wife is called upon to submit

to her husband. For example, a *Love & Respect* couple has a serious disagreement over homeschooling versus sending a child to a public school or a private Christian school with high tuition. A decision must be made by September. Suppose they discuss this thoroughly as he tries in every way to show her love and she tries to show respect. Finally, all alternatives are exhausted, and they still strongly disagree. Because of some serious financial problems at present, and because he has checked the public school out and it gets a decent academic rating, the husband decides that this year at least the child goes to public school. His wife is not happy, but she is called to defer to her husband. She is not called to agree with him, and in the long run her position may prove to be the better one, necessitating a change of course. Nonetheless, because the husband has been given the greater responsibility, he must have the greater authority. So for now, the child will attend the public school even though the wife believes it will be at the expense of the child's spiritual welfare.

Secular culture says that such a decision is unfair to the wife, and in a sense that is true. However—and this is an extremely important point—would it be more unfair to the husband to hold him primarily responsible for the marriage and the family and not give him final authority? For a wife to say, “You can't do that, we're equal!” means she grabs veto power. Few things feel so unfair and dishonoring to a husband as that.

Egalitarians take the position that a husband and wife should make a decision based on who has the greatest expertise. But that begs the question, what do you do when both spouses claim to have greater insight? Coming back to our home school or public school debate, that was precisely the case. Neither one would give an inch. A couple may seldom come to an impasse like this, but they should have a theological and organizational understanding in place in the event there is the need for a tiebreaker decision. This idea may sound ridiculous to those who dream of a perfect egalitarian world, but it makes perfect sense to the couple who wants to make the institution of marriage work long-term. In a Christian marriage a woman does not have the biblical right to say, “I'm going to do what I prefer in spite of my husband's opinion. I feel I'm right. This is the twenty-first century! Besides, I make more money than he does.” That is not what Scripture plainly teaches. The woman is not the head; for better or worse, the man has that responsibility.

Does making the man the head always result in perfect decisions? Obviously not. We live in a fallen world, and husbands are quite fallible. Nonetheless the biblical model

for decision-making in the marriage is better than the two alternatives: (1) the wife is in charge; (2) both are in charge. Egalitarianism sounds like it might be more fair, but there is no answer for the honest stalemate, and it often fosters exhausting negotiation or such strict boundaries concerning “who has authority over what” that spiritual oneness is undermined and eroded.

### Session 10, Question 12

All of the quotes from pages 221–222 in *Love & Respect* center around what I call Leadership 101—the most basic of all leadership principles: if you give somebody primary responsibility they must have primary authority to carry out that responsibility. One way of looking at Leadership 101 is described in choice b. If the husband has 51 percent of the responsibility, he must have 51 percent of the authority. But ranking herself under her husband’s responsibility and authority is a choice each wife must make for herself. According to Ephesians 5:22, she does this out of love and reverence for Christ: “Place yourselves under your husband’s authority as you have placed yourself under the Lord’s authority” (translation mine).

To violate Leadership 101 is to frustrate a husband. He may get angry and dictatorial or he can rebel by becoming Mr. Passive and deserting his God-given responsibility, allowing his wife to be head. During many years of counseling, I have seen both kinds of husbands and neither approach leads to a happy marriage. I am not saying all this is easy, especially for the wife who is capable, verbal, and aggressive. But allowing the husband to be head pays off in the long run, as one wife discovered. She and her husband are both professors at a major American university. Recently, they had one of their few major stalemates. The decision involved purchasing a vacation home. She wanted it, but he did not, for financial reasons. Rather than yielding to her husband’s authority she insisted that they do things her way. Her letter continues:

“Until the vacation home stalemate, we had been conscious to not live a lifestyle that was dependent on my income. [But] I wanted a vacation home and pushed the point, even though my husband didn’t support the purchase. Turning this decision back to my husband was one of the first things I did after reading your book. Apart from the fact that I violated my husband’s authority, I also realized that the ‘issue wasn’t the issue’ and that purchasing something we couldn’t afford on my husband’s income was inconsistent with a commitment to honor his desire to provide for me and felt very disrespectful to him.”

With no regrets, this wife told her husband she would support whatever he decided to do with the vacation condo. After telling her how critically important it was to him that she had stepped back and allowed him to be the leader, he decided to sell the condo sometime in the future. What surprised her the most, however, was how right it felt to respect her husband's authority. She had feared being stripped of her dignity; instead all she lost was her initial sense of contentiousness.

### Session 11, Question 4

What I say here is for good-willed wives and good-willed husbands who are willing to practice Love and Respect as they discuss a problem that affects the entire family. The wife should keep in mind that her husband may be more open to feedback and suggestions than she first thought. And the husband should remember that spiritual leadership is his responsibility.<sup>i</sup> As a husband, realize that spiritual leadership is not rocket science; it is more of an art that you can master if you are willing to do three things:

- a. Show your wife that Christ is an important part of your life: pray and read Scripture on your own and with her; talk together about what Scripture means in your lives; pray together for guidance in parenting and in being a Love and Respect couple who want to honor the Lord.
- b. Be there, part of whatever is going on—family devotions, praying before bed, going to church, and other spiritual endeavors. If you are not as verbal as your wife, delegate certain duties (like the Bible story) to her. Leaders delegate all the time; it is part of being a leader. Your job is to be sure everyone is listening as they see that you are interested and “into” what is happening.

As you make decisions, from small ones to big ones, make it clear to your wife and children that you are depending on Christ for wisdom. Make Proverbs 3:5–6 a family motto. Once or twice a week, as your wife may share a concern about one of the children, or some other problem, stop right there and lead in a short prayer about the situation. Take the issue that may be burdening your wife and carry it up to God. You don't have to solve her problem; give it to the One who can solve it. This will mean more than the world to your wife.

<sup>i</sup> The husband's responsibility for spiritual leadership is strongly implied in Ephesians 5:23–27. Note especially v. 23: “For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church.” The parallel is clear: because Jesus Christ is the responsible spiritual leader of the church, so a husband is to be the responsible spiritual leader in relationship to his wife.

In short, to be a spiritual leader the husband needs to show up and be interested. And, just as important, his wife needs to step back a bit if necessary and let him lead. He may be halting, unsure, a bit clumsy at times, but he can do it if given a chance. If a wife undercuts, criticizes, shows disapproval because all is not being done as well as she thinks it should be done, the husband will sense this in an instant and back off. A leader needs followers. A husband's wife should be his most supportive and enthused follower.

### Session 13, Question 3

That you may be suffering right now, I have no doubt. But have you considered that God is allowing this suffering in order to reward you? The writer of Hebrews instructs us to fix "our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). When I began teaching people in deeply troubled marriages that their present suffering would be rewarded in heaven, I thought they would turn me off. Instead, I found many of them saying things like, "I never thought about God using my spouse in my life," or "This gives me a desire to endure since what I do matters to God." Following are some typical letters:

*"One question I was asking God was, 'How can someone you love so much be so hurtful and just turn their back on you?' I was feeling really let down and pushed away. . . [But God's] answer to me was: 'I've been there, I know how you feel and I died for you.' Oh my, what a revelation! This was not an issue of whether my [spouse] was treating me correctly, but whether I was looking at this whole relationship the way God does. [My suffering] is a form of worship, obedience and praise to God. . . That is a tall order to meet, but what a joy to know I am doing it all for the glory of God."*

*"I have been married for 37 years . . . What an eye opener for me that I should be loving and respectful, not for my [spouse], but for God."*

*"Even if I see no change in my marriage, I know I am doing what pleases God and this alone gives me peace and takes the edge off the hurt and pain. The emotions are less and less significant and there is hope. When I fail, I just thank God for His mercy and patience."*

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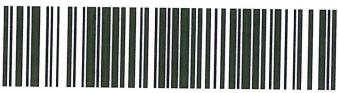












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