

## Your Husband's Greatest Need

Fill in the blank. "Behind every successful man is \_\_\_\_\_." If you answered a pushy mother-in-law or a nagging wife, you need to keep reading! The correct answer is an admiring and respectful wife.

Before you dismiss this as a worn-out joke, consider the fact that God instructs a wife to respect her husband: "Nevertheless, let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself and let the wife see to it that she respects her husband." (Ephesians 5:33) He is to treat her as a God-given treasure to be loved, cared-for, nourished, and cherished. She, however, is commanded to respect him. With a little reflection it becomes clear that her admiration can have a major impact in his inspiration and motivation to confidently carry out his role as a husband and father. Her genuine appreciation enables her husband to see himself as capable of handling life's responsibilities.

Admiration not only motivates but also rewards the husband's existing achievements. Many women are unaware that heartfelt appreciation for what their man has done gives him more satisfaction than his paycheck. Criticism deflates and wounds his spirit. He is apt to become more defensive and argumentative about his shortcomings. Admiration, on the other hand, energizes him. A husband expects and needs his wife to be enthusiastically behind him. He draws strength and support from her that enables him to achieve more than he could without it. A man simply thrives on a woman's admiration.

A word of caution—never fake respect. God's commands are not to be used selfishly as a gimmick. Flattering your husband will only do harm; "A flattering mouth works ruin." (Proverbs 26:28) For your admiration to be of any real value, it must genuinely reflect your attitude. Perhaps you are saying to yourself, "Well, that sounds great but you don't know my husband. He's a jerk in about every department. I surely don't want him looking outside of our marriage for approval, but honestly, how can I sincerely admire him the way he is?" Good point. Many men are miserable failures when it comes to aggressively loving their wives. They see little need to show her affection, provide open, honest communication, or demonstrate family commitment as a father. From a human point of view, many men don't deserve the respect they desire. From God's point of view, it is a different matter.

Consider God's command to the husband to love his wife in Ephesians 5:25. It is a command that he is to obey by an act of his will. It is not based on any positive quality or virtue that she possesses. Though such things bring great blessing and enjoyment, they should not be the basis of his love for her. If every appealing characteristic and every virtue of his wife were to disappear, a husband is still under just as great an obligation to love her. That is the kind of love Christ has for His church and is therefore the kind of love every Christian husband is to have for his wife. The man that loves his wife for what

she can give to him loves as the world loves, not as Christ loves. When a man chooses to love her as an act of his will, an interesting phenomenon begins to take place in his heart. In fact, it appears to be a principle—whatever he chooses to love and practice loving soon becomes attractive to him.

Should a wife respect a husband that is not all he should be? Yes. What applies to the husband also applies to the wife. If she will yield to the Holy Spirit's directive, He will enable her to actively search for areas of strength. They may be few and far between, but as she chooses to verbalize her unconditional appreciation she will notice that two things will begin to happen. First, she will become more spontaneous in expressing appreciation to her man. Secondly, he will sense that the "artic cold" of her criticism and disapproval has changed to a warm, spring breeze. As a result, he will begin to see her in a new way which will spur him toward genuine change. A guarantee? No. But it is truly amazing what often happens when she becomes willing to verbalize respect.

Remember ladies, men thrive on appreciation. Honestly evaluate your relationship with your husband in light of God's Word. If you are practicing respect, praise God! If there is room for improvement, be truthful with God, yourself, and your husband. Ask Him for the grace to be the kind of wife He desires you to be.