



CHAPTER 7

Always Honor Your Spouse

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("Rafe")

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It's Your CHOICE – Always Honor Your Spouse

ALWAYS HONOR YOUR SPOUSE

Always honor your spouse. There is the positive aspect of honoring your spouse, and there is the negative aspect of what you must refrain from doing as you carry out your commitment to always honor your spouse. These will be discussed separately.

I believe that much of the tension that comes from the battle over the Ephesians Chapter 5 instructions and the God-proclaimed roles for husbands and wives is total nonsense. By the point that you are asserting those verses to your spouse, you two are well beyond the obedience zone. A very simple fact is this. The husband cannot be the head of a happy marriage if the wife is “submitting” to him only because of forced subservience or because of a husband’s demand of allegiance. Similarly, if the wife has affirmative intentions to disregard the husbands thoughts and requests, whether by direct challenge or by manipulation, there cannot be an atmosphere of peace in the relationship. If you and your spouse are engaged in a continuing “king of the mountain” struggle, then there is little hope for a truly happy marriage.

At the very start of your marriage you should make the commitments listed in Chapter 6. In fact, these are the types of commitments that should be repeated and expressed openly in the presence of your children as they are growing up so that your children will be happily secure in the stability and commitment of their parents’ marriage, and so that your children will understand the reality of the inviolate commitments involved in marriage.

(1) HONORING YOUR SPOUSE (THE DO’S)

Years ago I made a decision that I was going to try to use a positive or complimentary adjective to attach to the name of my precious wife and to the names of my dear children whenever I would say their names in conversation with others. I decided that in this simple way I would have a vehicle to regularly express to others how I honor my family members and also I would have a very regular reminder to myself about how wonderful “my three girls” are. Whether I am speaking to a clerk in a store, a waitress, a person in business, or anyone else, I try to say something like “my precious wife” instead of saying “my wife.” Or I may say “my beautiful Pam.” I do not add a positive adjective absolutely every time that I mention her name. But I can safely say that a very high majority of the time I do so. After years of following this simple practice I can absolutely say that attaching a positive adjective to the name of your spouse when speaking to others is a significant enhancer of the marriage relationship. I know how it affects me daily, and I know that it is a regular and powerful statement to my wife and to others about the high esteem I have for my dear wife.

Honoring your spouse to others includes other aspects of communication. Just as the terrible act of putting your spouse down to others damages the relationship, so your positive actions and words to express honor of your spouse will enhance your marriage.

Do not be ashamed for others to know that you love your spouse and that your spouse is the most important person to you in the entire world. Be sure that you have a picture of your spouse as the first picture in your billfold. Make certain that you have a picture of your spouse on your dresser at home and on your desk or station at work. These pictures give you the blessing of a

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constant reminder of your spouse. They also give you a reminder to be thinking about and praying for your spouse throughout the day. They also are a tangible statement **to** your spouse that you are happy to show the world that you belong to your spouse and that you have no reservation or embarrassment about others seeing and knowing that you are in love. The display of pictures of your spouse also has an impact on others. When others see those photographs they will develop the proper understanding of you as a happily married person and they will not have incorrect or harmful expectations for or about you.

When someone request that you participate in something that conflicts with your plans to do something with your spouse, take the opportunity to honor your spouse and your marriage. Instead of simply declining, or answering generally that you have other plans, say something like, “That sounds great, but I already have that time reserved to go on a walk with the most important person in my life, my precious wife.”

When is the last time you planned specific words of honor, praise or appreciation for you to express to your spouse the next time you are alone? You like to receive compliments, so compliment your spouse. You like to receive praise, so praise your spouse. You like to be thanked and appreciated so show and express your appreciation to your spouse.

When you are with your spouse be sure that your words, actions, expressions and your non-verbal communications all express honor and respect for your spouse. Instead of taking your spouse for granted, your spouse must remain as the most important person in the world to you. Think of the most famous and acclaimed person you know of. Think of how you would honor that person. Then make sure that your honor your spouse even more so.

This principle of honoring your spouse to others is not anything terribly profound. It will only happen, however, if you **CHOOSE** to do it, and then you carry through. **DO IT!** Remember . . . always, always, always honor and affirm your spouse when he or she is mentioned or discussed with others as well as when you interact with your spouse.

(2) HONORING YOUR SPOUSE (THE DON'TS)

You must promise and covenant that you will not say disparaging or derogatory remarks to or about your spouse. This includes the conversation between you and your spouse, and it includes conversation with others.

When each spouse is totally committed not to cut down, belittle, or ridicule the other spouse and not to verbally attack the other spouses, those types of “little foxes” that could develop into marriage war will be avoided.

If one looks at the instruction given by God that the husband is to love his wife as his own body (Ephesians 5:28), one can see the logic of not cutting down or putting down his wife. Furthermore God declares that the husband and wife are “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:8; I Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 5:31). You would not take a knife and slice your face to shreds. You would not take an ice pick and plunge it into your eyeball. Remember, you

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and your spouse are “one flesh,” so anything you do which is hurtful to your spouse, is in fact hurtful to you.

Often words have the power to create deeper and more painful wounds than sickness or physical injury. Once the words are spoken they are put into another person's memory and even after the initial sting is gone, memory cells have been filled up with those words and there may never be a “healing” like there will be with a physical laceration or abrasion. Bitter words can lead to arguments, which in turn may lead to damage to the relationship and the loss of many other joys and benefits.

Applying the “one flesh” reality, it does not take a great amount of imagination to see how such cutting words are not only destructive to the other person and to the relationship, but they are actually also self-destructive and self-defeating. That being true, why would one spouse say evil or hurtful things to the other? Ultimately it has to be rooted in the sin of selfishness. It is the “I want it MY way” or “I will show you who ultimately will be boss,” or “I am the greater and you are the lesser.” It is very gutless to seek to elevate oneself by putting another down. Regrettably this occurs even with some Christian couples. It is those Christian couples who put each other down, or verbally attack each other, which experience difficulties in their marriage relationships and disharmony in the home. I repeat, commit one to another that you will not under any circumstance send hurtful verbal missiles at each other. Don't do it.

You have probably had the experience of being in a group when someone decides to make fun of a spouse or to make a spouse the brunt of a joke or ridicule. Perhaps you have heard a person share to someone outside of the family a matter that may be funny, but it is embarrassing to the other spouse that anyone outside of the family would ever hear about it. In those contexts there may be laughing and smiling when the tale is told . . . but it is **NOT** funny. The speaker is committing acts of dishonor and disloyalty which most certainly will harm the warmth of the marriage relationship. Such “banter” has no place in a Christian relationship. Because the marriage relationship is the highest human relationship created by God, such public ridicule of a spouse or of the marriage relationship actually impugns the character of our Lord Jesus Christ who compared the relationship between Himself and the church to that of a marriage couple (Mark 2:19-20; John 3:29; Ephesians 5:22-32; Revelation 21:2, 9-10).

The Christian husband and the Christian wife will be plagued with the “natural man” until they step into heaven. Much of what I will have to say in this book depends upon each spouse's personal relationship with the Lord and how diligently that individual is actively pursuing the goal of growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. What do you do when there is a difference of opinion or something happens that leads to you being irritated with your spouse? Applying the commitment that you will not put down, tear down, ridicule, or verbally attack your spouse, sometimes you decide that the best response at the time is NO RESPONSE (yes, despite some of the modern advocacy that open communication means that you say anything that is on your mind or that you talk with your spouse about absolutely everything, I really am saying that often you just keep your mouth shut and let it ride and forget it). If you feel that you have some emotion about the matter and that it is appropriate for discussion, by all means wait until the emotional climate is very calm. Then talk about it without using any words that are condescending or a put down of your spouse. If you sense that you are

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having some inner feelings of anger or disgust toward your spouse, be all the more vigilant to hold your tongue (the “shut-up” principle) and wait to speak

What we are talking about is first a **CHOICE** to make a commitment never to say anything disparaging or derogatory to or about your spouse, followed by a series of **CHOICES** in the application of that commitment concerning the verbal exchanges to or about your spouse (and the same applies to tones, attitudes, facial expressions, and physical interaction with your spouse).

If you are one on one with a friend and that friend makes a joke about his or her spouse or demeans his or her spouse, there are a couple of responses that should be made, depending on your relationship with that person. If it is a close Christian friend who puts down his or her spouse, then you will be a faithful friend by saying something like this. “I assume that you are not intending to hurt your wife. But when you make a joke that puts her down, it immediately causes me to be uncomfortable. The Lord tells us to love our wife. My wife and I have a commitment that we will honor and respect each other to the point that we will not put each other down and we will not make fun of the other in public or with a third party. That loyalty and commitment pays big dividends in our relationship, and I would urge you in love to consider such a practice in your marriage. It just is very uncomfortable for me to hear a Christian make fun of or put down his wife.”

If you do not have a close relationship with the person, then perhaps the only thing that can be done is to very obviously refrain from joining in the levity. If it continues at all, walking away from the conversation may be the best action to take. It is not healthy for a Christian to even give the appearance of approval or participation by laughing along with such other person who is violating principles of honoring his or her spouse.

In summary, never put down, tear down, cut down, demean, make fun of or ridicule your spouse when speaking to him or her, or in any type of verbal exchange with an outside party. It is your **CHOICE**. **CHOOSE** to always honor your spouse.