



## CHAPTER 20

### Give a Cheerful Countenance (a.k.a. Smile)

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("Rafe")

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**GIVE A CHEERFUL COUNTENANCE**  
**(a.k.a. SMILE)**

Here is a little nugget of truth for having a happy relationship. Make sure that the countenance that you portray to your spouse is one that is positive, pleasant and affirming. Smile!

About twenty-five ago I heard a woman tell a story that really hit home with me. She stated that she had carefully cleaned her house before leaving for the store. Her husband was left to take care of the kids. While she was gone the father found a sturdy box and he turned it into a toboggan. The steps down to the basement became the slope. They were having a great time bouncing and banging down the steps only to land with a thud at the bottom. Those carefully cleaned steps soon became littered with shreds of cardboard and there were a couple of marks on the wall. The father put both kids and himself in that big box for one glorious final run and they laughed their way down the steps until they rolled out at the bottom. Right then the back door opened. All of their eyes were instantly riveted upon the mother who stood at the top of the stairs. There was a deafening second of silence. . . . Then the mother broke out in laughter and the father and children instantly joined in great belly laughing and giggling. It turned into a very special moment for the entire family. What made the difference following that second of expectant silence? It was how the mother responded toward the father and children. If she had chewed out her husband and kids for getting her clean steps dirty, it would have been a bad ending to what had been a fun time. By contrast, the mother's smiling countenance and affirmation brought her directly into the fun and allowed the time to be one of genuine family unity and joy.

What we portray with our eyes and face will have a significant impact on others. This is even more true within the family context. The above story caused me to think through the impact of my countenance upon my wife and children. I thought to myself that it would make for a more pleasant home if I would try to remember always to greet my kids and to greet my dear wife with a smile. When I walk in the room knowing that I will probably see someone in my family I consciously put on a smile and make sure that my eyes catch the eyes of my wife or the eyes of my children in a way that my eyes say, "I affirm you," and "I love you," and "I am really happy to see you." I cannot quantify the specific value this practice has had through these decades, but I know that such affirmative **CHOICES** day-by-day and encounter-by-encounter have been of very real and substantial benefit in developing warm and happy relationships in our home.

Here again is the practical rule. **CHOOSE** to affirm your spouse with your very countenance. When you know you are going to see your spouse, put on a smile and do everything you can to communicate with your eyes that you love, honor, respect and affirm your spouse. It does not cost anything to do this. It is a very simple principle. But you will miss the genuine benefit of doing this if you do not **CHOOSE** to make this your practice.

One of the natural consequences of smiling more is that you also laugh more together. By all means **LAUGH TOGETHER**. Think about the significant relationships you have had. When you describe the relationships that have been very meaningful to you, I'll bet that you will include the fact that you could laugh together with that person. There was the freedom to say what you wanted and you knew that the person would be accepting rather than judging. That created an environment ripe for laughter. With the husband- wife relationship being the highest

It's Your CHOICE – Give A Cheerful Countenance (a.k.a. Smile)

relationship created by God, laughter should characterize your times together. I am not talking about being flippant about serious matters. I am not talking about being giddy when it is inappropriate. I am talking about such an open, relaxed and non-prideful relationship that there is the freedom to be yourself, the freedom to laugh at yourself, the freedom to laugh with your spouse, and the desire to laugh together.

**CHOOSE** to smile at your spouse. **CHOOSE** to laugh together.