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Have you ever noticed how many love songs there are? Love is certainly a subject of interest! While catchy and entertaining, some of these songs provide contradictory advice on how to start and maintain a romantic relationship. In contrast, God's Word provides clear and consistent wise counsel for how to maintain a successful marriage relationship. God's Word shows that two essential elements to a godly marriage are love and respect. Both husband and wife contribute these two elements, but the Book of Ephesians explains that the husband's focus is loving his wife, and the wife's focus is respecting her husband.

Ephesians 5:33:

Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

The husband is told to love his wife; he is primarily responsible for the love in a marriage. In Ephesians 5:25 the love he is to show his wife is compared with the love Christ had for the Church, referring to those of Israel who believed during his earthly ministry. It is a great love.

Ephesians 5:25-27:

*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;
That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,
That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

Jesus Christ truly loved God's people, so he extended himself in service to them. He stayed up late into the evening healing people (Mark 1:32-34); he also brought his disciples peace by doing things like calming the stormy sea when they were afraid (Mark 4:37-39). What an example for husbands to follow! God's Word also states that husbands are to love and care for their wives as much as they love and care for their own bodies.

Ephesians 5:28,29:

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.

The husband first loves and gives, and his wife will respond. One way my husband loves and cherishes me is by writing me notes of love and appreciation. His loving words encourage me to be my best for God and for him. Whatever way a husband finds to nourish and cherish his wife, his doing so will warm her heart and inspire her to reverence him more and more.

The latter part of Ephesians 5:33 states: "...and the wife *see* that she reverence *her* husband." God's design is that the wife reverences, or respects, her husband. Once a woman gets married, she has committed herself to that man. Along with that comes the giving of reverence to honor and esteem her husband. The Amplified Bible renders this part of Ephesians 5:33 as follows: "...and let the wife see that she respects *and* reverences her husband [that she notices him, regards him, honors him, prefers him, venerates, and esteems him; and that she defers to him, praises him, and loves and admires him exceedingly]." All of these actions are involved in the wife's contribution of respect. She believes the best of her husband, expecting him to be right, to walk with God and do the Word.

My husband is someone I *expect* to be right. Because I respect him as a man who stands for God, it is easy for me to believe for God to work in him to make the best decisions. I saw the benefits of respecting my husband in a huge way when he decided to hire a building contractor to redo the leaky foundation of our house. I initially did not want to undertake such an expensive and inconvenient construction project. My husband listened to me and considered my concerns, but ultimately I agreed to respect his final decision. He decided on starting this renovation right away. No more than a week after the new foundation was completed, our town experienced torrential rainfall that led to the largest flood in more than one hundred years and damaged many basements in our neighborhood. But not a drop of water leaked into our

basement! I was so impressed that God had worked in my husband to schedule the renovation as soon as possible. The timing was perfect! I am very glad that I decided to respect my husband's decision.

God's design for a godly marriage includes the husband's love and the wife's respect. These two vital elements contribute greatly toward a marriage full of blessings and strength, year after year. How wonderful to understand God's wise counsel for a sweet and successful marriage!

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