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## Husbands

It seems to be mostly women who read the books and attend the classes on How to Please Your Husband, How to be Submissive, How to Help *Him*, and so forth. We men seem to be fairly successful in dodging this sort of thing. Our wives would surely have a good case if they would ask us to take equal time to learn our "trade" as spouses. But my observation of myself and other husbands is that it's going to take a lot more than that to get us into classes on husband-hood.

Fortunately, there is another method, somewhat more subtle, but very effective nevertheless. Pastors who do systematic Bible teaching know that many principles of the Christian way of life are very useful in making husbands into people who are fit to live with. So - if a husband can't be cajoled or bribed into a special class, he can still be learning in the regular Bible classes the principles he needs on which to pattern his activities as a family man.

The biblical principles related to marriage and the husband's duties, when they are understood and applied by husbands, can produce wonderful results. And really, it is the standard and basic Christian life principles, so useful in all areas of spiritual growth, that are the most important in developing and maintaining a happy and productive relationship between spouses.

A husband is commanded to love his wife. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church..." (EPH. 5:25) It is true that young women are to be taught by older women how they are to love their husbands (TITUS 2:4). But nowhere in Scripture is there the same forceful command to women to love their husbands. It is paramount in the Bible that the wife's love is the willing response to that which the husband initiates.

Lack of harmony in the home, for which the husband has the predominant responsibility, is so important that 1 PETER 3:7 states that a man's prayers will not be answered if such

harmony is not present. Failure on a man's part to treat his wife in Grace, and failure on his part to train his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, are carnality. A husband who despises and hates his wife and neglects his family's spiritual welfare is living in sin, just as surely as the unrepentant adulterer or the confirmed drunkard.

Along with other types of backsliding believers who are stumbling blocks in the way of someone's spiritual progress, the man who persists in maintaining an unstable home life is a prime candidate for serious divine discipline.

The ability to manifest love is part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit and is a product of consistent and long-term spiritual growth. Therefore, a man's capacity for love for his wife is proportional to his total spiritual progress. A man's spiritual progress is relatively easy to see; and it is certainly noticeable to his family. True spiritual growth results in a person's becoming more Christ-like every day; and this quality is observed when the fruit of the Spirit becomes more and more obvious.

*Gen. 5:22,23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control..."*

Look at those signs of maturity! Are you acquainted with husbands who exhibit these traits in their daily lives, with their wives and children? Do you realize that a man like this would be irresistible to his wife and a hero to his children? A man like this would have an excellent chance of winning even an unbelieving wife to Christ, in no time. Bible doctrine makes men out of boys, even if the boys are over thirty.

It is a principle of God's authority and the Chain of Command that "The one in authority initiates and the subordinate responds." In God's plan, men have an enormous capacity, by the Grace of God, to create the responses in their wives that are the most beautiful and pleasing.

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If a husband is a bully, only the most spiritual, submissive, and dedicated wife will stay with him. Only a very mature woman will willingly endure long term suffering at the hands of an immature husband. There are a number of historical cases of godly women who suffered to the point of death in the attempt to win the ungodly husband.

Certainly wives are commanded to be submissive. But the man who must demand that his wife submit, to get her cooperation, has missed the boat entirely. Anyone who is in a position of authority should never expect his subordinate to submit simply because it is his duty. Yes, the subordinate's duty is to be submissive; but the one in authority is in deep trouble if he must be authoritarian to get his way.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE LOVE

True love will have the characteristics listed in 1 COR. 13. It is possible for anyone to compare the actions of any person with these Bible standards and determine whether true love is being exhibited. These would be especially useful for a single person trying to determine whether a member of the opposite sex has true capacity for love as God intended.

Where these traits are missing between husband and wife, it is the husband's responsibility to provide them (remember, "Love your wife..."). This is possible only through Christian growth towards maturity over a period of time under the continuous control of the Holy Spirit, as in Ephesians 4.

These same patterns dictate also the nature of the wife's response to her husband. But the man who believes that he will receive the proper response, without his first making the initial steps, is indulging in wild wishful thinking, to say the least.

Final Note: The husband who sees no need to change, or who refuses to submit to the Plan of God for his life and marriage, is going to have to abide by the results. His wife's response to him may be in large measure a response to what he sends her way; and in that respect, he gets what

he deserves. Of course, many of us have wives who are themselves Grace-oriented, so they quite often do not "give tit for tat"; and we should be grateful for that underserved blessing.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF LOVE (I COR. 13)

Love is slow to lose patience. It doesn't demonstrate irritations or reflect anger or have a quick temper. It has fully accepted the character of the one loved.

Love looks for a way to be constructive. Love is actively creative. It is able to recognize needs. It discovers successful methods of improving or contributing to the other's life.

Love is not possessive. Love does not hold exclusive control where one is allowed little or no freedom to fulfill himself apart from the one who loves him.

Love is not anxious to impress. Love doesn't seek to make an impression or to create an image for personal gain.

Love does not cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. It is not self-centered. It has the ability to change and to accept change. It is flexible. It doesn't allow, or expect, life to revolved around itself.

Love has good manners. It has respect for others which results in a set of Christ-centered standards. It has discretion. It knows what is proper and when.

Love does not pursue selfish advantage. It does not have primary concern for personal appetites or for social status; but it shows concern for needs of the one loved and families and friends involved.

Love is not touchy. Love is not hyper-sensitive or easily hurt. It does not take things personally. It is not emotionally involved with personal opinions so that to reject ideas is to reject the one giving them.

Love does not keep account of evil. Love doesn't review wrongs which have been forgiven. It does not dwell on past sins. It destroys evidence of past mistakes wherever possible.

Love doesn't gloat over the wickedness of other people. Love doesn't compare self with others for self-justification. It doesn't use others' sin to excuse personal weaknesses.

Love is glad with all godly men when truth prevails. Love is in active fellowship with dedicated Christians. It is occupied with spiritual objectives.

Love knows no limit to its forbearance. Love has the ability to live with the inconsistencies of others. It has empathy for the problems of others.

There is no end to Love's trust. Love believes in the person loved and in the person's worth without question. It has no reason to doubt the person's integrity.

There is no fading of Love's confidence. Love is not fickle. It has perfect peace and confidence that God is primarily responsible for introducing the right partner at the right time.

Love has unlimited endurance. Love is able to outlast anything. It is able to endure all obstacles and even love in the face of unreturned love.

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