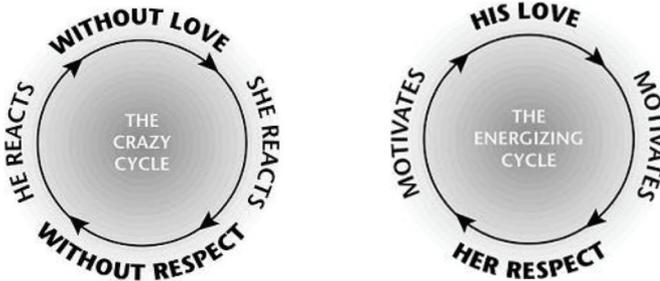


Marriage is not always easy. In 1 Corinthians 7:28, Paul says, “*Those who marry will face many troubles in this life.*” There are times that we wish we could change the actions, reactions, or behaviors of our spouse. However, Scripture teaches us this principle: **The way that you change your spouse is by first changing _____.**

READ Ephesians 5:22-33. The secret to changing your spouse and having a great and successful marriage is hidden in one single verse in the New Testament. Ephesians 5:33 says, “*Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*”

This is a command in Scripture that means husbands are to love their wives (even when they don’t feel like it) and wives are to respect their husbands (even when they don’t feel like it).

When you begin to speak your spouse’s love language, they begin to respond to you with what you need most.



Here’s the downward cycle of marriages: Without love from him, she reacts without respect; without respect from her, he reacts without love. When a husband feels disrespected, he has a natural tendency to react in ways that feel unloving to his wife. And when the wife feels unloved, she has a natural tendency to react in ways that feel disrespectful to her husband.

How Do You Change Your Wife? Show Her Love.

C _____ – **She wants you to be close.**

Closeness is more than just physical; it is a spiritual and emotional connection. READ Genesis 2:24. In Hebrew, “cleave” means “to cling, to hold, or to keep close.” Your wife will feel loved when you move toward her and let her know you want to be close with a look, a touch, or a smile. Learn her “Love Languages” (www.fivelovelanguages.com) to communicate closeness.

O _____ – **She wants you to open up to her.**

READ Song of Solomon 5:2. The imagery of an opening door symbolizes two people drawing close and sharing hearts. Wives often ask questions to get their husbands to open up to them because they equate openness with a deep sense of love. She needs to frequently hear about what you are thinking, feeling, and dreaming. She needs to feel like she can share herself with you without the fear of being judged or criticized. Praying together is a beautiful form of openness to each other and to God.

U _____ – **Don’t try to “fix” her; just listen.**

1 Peter 3:7 says, “*Live with your wives in an understanding way.*” Just listen! Don’t always offer a fix or solution. Sometimes she just wants to know you care, and listening is the best way to show that you care. Paraphrasing back to her what you heard her say is a good way to show that you understand. Set aside time every day for connecting – 15 minutes can make a huge difference.

P _____ – **She wants you to say, “I’m sorry.”**

READ 1 Peter 3:8. Conflict isn’t bad! Good marriages will have a lot of conflict, and often bad marriages will have very little conflict. The difference is that in good marriages they work out the conflict and use it as a way to connect more deeply. Are you having the same argument over and

over? Perhaps you are not truly making peace with each other. It is important to find the root cause of the conflict.

L_____ – She needs to know you're committed.

A woman always likes to hear her husband say, *"You alone are 'my love'"* (Song of Solomon 2:10). She needs constant assurance that you are a one-woman man. Your vow was, "until death" – that includes now too. Praise her in front of others. Ask her opinion on important decisions. Don't look lustfully at other women. Let her know your plans. Keep your commitments to her.

E_____ – She wants you to honor and cherish her.

A husband is to be one who "cherishes" his wife (Eph. 5:29). Your wife wants to know that you have her on your mind and heart first and foremost. Do your best to remember what she likes. Communicate, verbally and non-verbally, that she is the most important person in your life.

How Do You Change Your Husband? Show Him Respect.

Wives do not need a lot of coaching on being loving. It is something God built into them, and they do it naturally. However, they do need help with respect. Showing men the respect they crave is the surest way to motivate them to serve and love. How do you do that? Six principles to remember:

C_____ – Appreciate his desire to work and achieve.

Conquest signifies men's desire to do well in their work. They want to go out and conquer the world. Adam was created and given the task of working the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15). Eve was created because Adam could not do it alone. Men need a job, a purpose, but they also need women to help them achieve that purpose. Men often identify themselves by their work and find their self-worth in their job. Disparaging comments about a man's job make him feel belittled as a person. A man wants his woman to believe in him and what he does.

H_____ – Appreciate his desire to protect and provide.

Biblical hierarchy is not sexist. It reflects what Scripture says in Ephesians 5:23-24. Biblical hierarchy or headship is a position of sacrifice and service. Husbands want to provide for and protect their families. Remember Ephesians 5:21 sets all of this in the contexts of mutual submission. The problem many women have today—including Christian wives—is that they want to be treated like a princess, but deep down they resist treating their husbands like the king.

A_____ – Appreciate his desire to serve and to lead.

Authority gives him the ability to carry out the responsibilities that God has placed on him to serve, and if necessary, die for the family. "All authority" has been given to Jesus (Matthew 28:18) and he uses his authority to lovingly guide and serve. Men are to do the same thing. When there is a rare occasion where compromise is impossible, his authority ought to be respected. Very often, given the authority and responsibility to lead and serve the family, a man will make the choice that is the biggest sacrifice for him in order to spare his family.

I_____ – Appreciate his desire to analyze and counsel.

Women have intuition that helps them and should be heeded by men, but men have insight which women should respect. Together they make a powerful combination. *"Husbands and wives need each other."* Sometimes your husband can give you valuable advice to help with problems. You can let him try to "fix" you once in a while. Remember, he's built to find and fix problems.

R_____ – Appreciate his desire for shoulder-to-shoulder friendship.

READ Genesis 2:18. Men communicate by sharing experiences through an activity. Men connect with one another through shoulder-to-shoulder activities that require little or no talking. Through this time the friendship deepens to where they can open up to one another on a very deep level. Wives can use this method to connect with their husbands and that will encourage them to open up to their wives.

S_____ – Appreciate his desire for sexual intimacy.

Just as the devil will do everything he can to bring two people together sexually _____ marriage, he does everything he can to keep them away from each other _____ marriage.

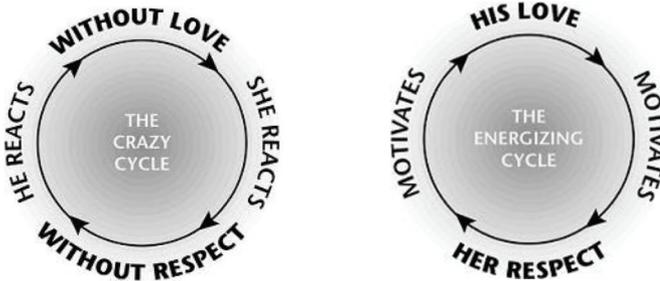
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