

# Best. Husband. Ever.

Wives can't change their husbands, but wives can and do have a tremendous influence on their husbands. How can you make that influence positive?

## **Men respond positively to praise.**

One of the most common complaints men make in my office is: "Dr. Chapman, in my work I am respected. People come to me for advice. But at home, all I get is criticism." What she considers suggestions, he reads as criticism. Her efforts to stimulate growth have backfired.

The fastest way to influence a husband is to give him praise. Praise him for effort, not perfection. You may be asking, But if I praise him for mediocrity, will it not stifle growth? The answer is a resounding "No." Your praise urges him on to greater accomplishments.

My challenge is to look for things your husband is doing right and praise him. Praise him in private, praise him in front of the children, praise him in front of your parents and his parents, praise him in front of his peers. Then stand back and watch him go for the gold.

## **Requests are more productive than demands.**

None of us like to be controlled, and demands are efforts at controlling. "If you don't mow the grass this afternoon, then I'm going to mow it." I wouldn't make that demand unless you want to be the permanent lawn mower. It is far more effective to say, "Do you know what would really make me happy?" Wait until he asks, "What?" Then say, "If you could find time this afternoon to mow the grass. You always do such a great job."

Let me illustrate by applying the principle to you. How do you feel when your husband says "I haven't had an apple pie since the baby was born. I don't guess I'm going to get any more apple pies for eighteen years"? Now, doesn't that motivate you? But what if he says, "You know what I'd really like to have? One of your apple pies. You make the best apple pies in the world. Sometime when you get a chance, I'd really love one of your apple pies. Chances are he'll have an apple pie before the week is over. Requests are more productive than demands.

## **Love is a two way street.**

If a wife wants to enhance her husband's ability to give her emotional love, perhaps her greatest influence will be in loving him. In my book, *The 5 Love Languages*, I talk about the importance of discovering your husband's primary love language - the thing that really makes him feel loved: words of affirmation, quality time, gifts, physical touch, or acts of service. Once you discover it, pour it on. Husbands are drawn to wives who are meeting their emotional need for love.

Can you do it, even if he is not loving you. God did. He loved us when we were unlovely. But that's God. I'm me. I know, but you are God's child and He can empower you to love an unlovely spouse. I've seen it many times. A wife chooses to speak her

husband's love language, even though she doesn't feel loved by him. He warms up and in time begins expressing her love language. Can emotional love be re-born in a marriage? You bet. But someone must begin the process. Why not you?

**Defensiveness reveals the inner self.**

A wife says, "Why does my husband get so defensive? All I have to do is mention that the grass needs mowing and he goes ballistic."

This husband is revealing his self-esteem hot spot. Some experience in his past has tied his sense of self worth to mowing the grass. Your mention of the grass translates "She thinks I'm not doing my job. I work like crazy, and now she is on my case about the grass." He sees it as a negative statement about his worth.

I know you didn't mean it that way. That's why I suggesting you observe his defensiveness, so that you can learn what is going on inside of him. We don't know these emotional hot spots until we touch one. It would be a good idea to make a list of all your husband's defensive reactions. Note what you said and did and how he responded. This insight will help you discover another way to discuss the topic that will be less threatening to his self-esteem.

Both husbands and wives hold a tremendous influence on their spouse. However, it is up to you whether your influence is positive.

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