



30-Day Respecting Your Husband Challenge

Jennifer Flanders

Day 1 — Choose Joy

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Philippians 4:4

Do you know the saying, "A happy wife makes a happy life"? Sadly, many wives use moodiness as a way to manipulate and control their husbands. But this concept also works in reverse. Having a pleasant, joyful, happy wife will make the rest of a man's life seem happier, fuller, and more satisfying.

We wives have the power to transform our homes from what might have been a vortex of negativity, darkness, and despair into a refuge of joy, radiance, and hope.

Our outlook on life has a profound effect not only on our own happiness, but on that of our husband and children as well. It has little to do with life circumstances and everything to do with choice.

Choosing joy is not about putting on a show for another person's sake. It's about changing the way we look at things. It's about being selective in our thoughts, choosing to dwell on the good instead of on the bad, and being glad for what we have instead of upset over what we don't.

Practice It

When life's trials and troubles try to steal your joy, look for ways that God might use those very things for your good and His glory. Stay focused on that silver lining rather than the looming storm.

Day 2—Honor His Wishes

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Philippians 2:4

One of the simplest ways a wife can bless her husband is to honor his wishes. She should make a priority those things that matter most to him—not out of compulsion, as if she were his slave, but willingly and joyfully, as a means of demonstrating thoughtfulness and placing another person's happiness ahead of her own.

If this concept sounds foreign to you, it shouldn't. Mothers everywhere take great pleasure in doing things that delight their children. Why shouldn't a wife give the same kind of consideration to her husband? Why shouldn't she seek to do the things she knows will please and delight and surprise the man she claims to love?

It's this sort of selfless love the Bible describes in Philippians 2:4. That passage goes on to say that we should consider others as more important than ourselves. Such consideration will go a long way in communicating honor and respect toward your husband.

Practice It

It's impossible to honor someone's wishes if you don't know what those wishes are, so talk to your husband about his priorities for you and his goals for the family. Ask him to compile a short list (three to five things) that he would most like to see you work on, then address those areas cheerfully and consistently.

Day 3—Pay Attention

Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. James 1:19

As much as possible, try to give your husband your undivided attention. Lay other tasks aside, look into his eyes, and listen to what he is saying with the goal of understanding and remembering his words.

You honor your spouse when you attend to his voice. But make sure you are listening actively, with your mind fully engaged in the conversation, as opposed to passively, where your ears hear the sounds that are coming out of your husband's mouth but your brain doesn't really register his words.

Sometimes it is neither practical nor feasible to drop everything in favor of making eye contact, but you can still communicate attentiveness by commenting on what is being said, asking questions, and stealing occasional glances at one another as you work.

We don't get points for pretending to pay attention when we really aren't. So focus on what your husband is saying. Allow his words to sink in and fully register. Listen . . . and let him know you are listening.

Practice It

Don't make your husband compete with a smart phone or computer screen for your attention. When he is around, log off, power down, and be available.

Day 4—Don't Interrupt

If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. Proverbs 18:13

Have you ever been around a person who won't let you finish a sentence? That gets really old really fast.

Even if you think you already know what your husband is going to say, giving him the opportunity to say it without cutting him off mid-sentence shows both respect and common courtesy.

If your husband takes the time to ponder what he is going to say before he says it, then it is especially important for you to practice patience and not interrupt as he tries to collect his thoughts and then put them into words.

No matter how quiet or introverted your husband is, don't monopolize the conversation. Take an occasional break from talking. Pause frequently enough to at least give him an opportunity to respond, even if it means just sitting in silence for a few moments.

Practice It

If work schedules cause you to be separated from your husband for most of the day, then write yourself reminders about what you want to tell him when you are both together again: random thoughts to share, questions to ask, funny things that happen, etc. The list will later allow you to listen as he tells you about his day without fear of forgetting the things you want to tell him about yours.

Day 5—Emphasize His Good Points

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Philippians 4:8

Sure, your husband has his faults (as do you), but dwelling on them will only make you both miserable. Instead, focus on the qualities you most admire.

It's a simple matter of treating others the way you want to be treated. Which would you prefer: That your husband focus his thoughts on your loveliest, most noble and praiseworthy characteristics? Or that he ignore your good points completely and concentrate instead on your most annoying and bothersome flaws?

It's okay for you and your husband to be different. Your strengths are not the same. Much of this is by design, as God intends for man and woman to complement one another. Different is not necessarily bad. It's just . . . different.

So don't focus on the areas where you're strong but your husband is weak-areas where, in your opinion, perhaps he doesn't quite measure up. Think instead on the areas where you're weak but your husband is strong-areas where he complements and completes you.

Practice It

Keep a running list of those things you most admire about your husband. Verbalize your appreciation for those qualities, both publicly and privately.

Day 6—Pray for Him

Pray without ceasing. 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Ruth Graham advises wives to "tell your mate the positive, and tell God the negative." Faithfully lift up your husband in prayer every day, and you will likely notice a transformation, not only in him but in yourself as well.

Of course, we don't need to wait until there is some problem or disagreement before beginning this practice. A wife can and should routinely intercede on her husband's behalf. Prayer should be a habit of life, something we do continuously.

We all need God's help, but husbands especially so since, as the head of their household, they have the concerns of the entire family resting on their shoulders.

Your husband is accountable before God, not only for himself but also for the way he leads and directs and serves and cares for his wife and children. That's a lot of responsibility! Yet Scripture tells us, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7).

Now that's a promise too good to ignore!

Practice It

For resources to help you cover your husband in prayer, check out ROH's [30-Day Praying for Your Husband Challenge](#) or [Praying for Your Husband from Head to Toe](#).

Day 7—Don't Nag

A continual dripping on a rainy day and a quarrelsome wife are alike. Proverbs 27:15

Although husbands can be forgetful, and a gentle reminder may sometimes be welcomed, constant, unsolicited pestering about something you've already discussed at length is rarely appreciated.

Does it bother you that your spouse doesn't always respond to matters with the same sense of urgency you feel? Perhaps he's stalling so he can think through the situation more clearly. Or maybe he disagrees with you on the course of action a circumstance warrants. Either way, it would be prudent to give the man a little space.

Contentious wives do far more complaining than praying. Can the same be said of you? If so, try giving up the persistent nagging in favor of persistent prayer, and see if that isn't much more effective in the long run.

Ultimately, only God can change hearts. If there is something you're concerned about, or if you disagree, prayer would be a better use of your time and energies. A patient, gentle, loving attitude goes much farther than a critical, faultfinding, or demanding demeanor.

Practice It

Take a look at the "Honey-Do List" that tempts you to nag your husband about household chores. Why not tend to as many of the items as you can yourself? Not in a showy, look-at-me-I'm-such-a-martyr sort of way, but in a helpful, quiet, I-want-to-take-as-much-off-your-plate-as-I-can manner.

Day 8—Be Thankful

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Giving thanks is something we are commanded repeatedly in Scripture to do. Obviously, it's important to God for His children to be grateful.

We owe a debt of gratitude to God, but this attitude should also spill over into our relationships with others. Our lives and our conversations should be marked by expressions of thankfulness toward our fellow man. And that goes double for the members of our own household.

Don't take your husband for granted. Express genuine appreciation for everything he does for you, whether great or small. But don't stop there. Real gratitude runs much deeper than words. It extends far beyond anything we can verbalize. Our thankfulness should affect not only how we think, but also how we live and how we treat the people around us.

Nothing will blind you faster or more effectively to your own blessings than moping over what you lack, rather than rejoicing over what you have. If you can't even recognize or

acknowledge all the good things in your life, then you certainly won't feel proper appreciation for them.

Practice It

Write down the good things in your life, big or small, and then actively look for ways to acknowledge and express appreciation for them.

Day 9— Smile at Him

A glad heart makes a cheerful face, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is crushed.
Proverbs 15:13

Any face looks better when it is graced with a happy, heartfelt smile. A radiant smile can transform an otherwise plain visage into something extremely attractive (just as an angry scowl can turn an extremely attractive face into something downright repulsive).

What's more, smiles spread happiness. A smile has the power not only to make you happy, but to make others happy as well. That's because smiles are contagious.

It's important to remember that communication starts before a single word is uttered. It begins with attitude and posture, with body language and facial expressions.

Ask yourself, What are my nonverbal cues saying to my husband? Is this really the message I want to send?

Do your facial expressions include furrowed brows, a distracted gaze, rolled eyes, a bored yawn? How many times might a smile be just as easy but a hundred times better? Next time, why not try smiling instead?

Practice It

Smile at your husband every day. Let your smile be the first thing he sees each morning and the last thing he sees before going to bed.

Day 10— Respond Physically

For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 1 Corinthians 7:4

There are acceptable alternatives for taking care of every need your husband has—except his physical ones. Theoretically, someone else could prepare his meals or clean his house or wash his laundry or care for his children, but you, as his wife, are the only person on earth who can rightfully address and fulfill his need for sexual intimacy.

It's a shortsighted wife who marginalizes or ignores her husband's need for physical intimacy. She cannot habitually deny him sex without it taking a toll on the happiness and stability of their marriage.

True, a husband who has vowed to stick with his wife for better or worse is obligated before God to faithfully honor that promise, whether his wife is enthusiastically accommodating or sexually frigid, whether she treats him with heartfelt respect or utter disdain, whether she is a joy or a terror to live with.

But if you truly love your husband, why would you want to behave in a way that makes keeping his vows more a drudgery than a delight? Why test his resolve unnecessarily? Why not, instead, make the most of every opportunity to reaffirm and reassure him of your own love and devotion-in a way that really speaks to him?

Practice It

Does your husband have a stronger sex drive than you do? Make it your goal to never turn him down again. (You don't have to tell him that's your plan, if you're afraid he'll be tempted to ask for sex three times a day . . . but then again, a little accountability might be good for both of you).

Day 11—Eyes Only for Him

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. Genesis 2:24

When a man and woman become husband and wife, they should leave home and family behind-not just physically, but mentally and emotionally-as they begin to pour themselves into establishing a new family, building their own home, and investing in their joint future.

But marriage also alters how we handle friendships; time spent with friends can no longer predominate our lives or free time. This is especially true when it comes to male/female friendships. Time spent together with friends of the opposite sex should probably be scaled back to zero, unless spouses are present.

If you want to safeguard your marriage and assure your husband of your undying love and devotion, then you must be extremely careful in the way you relate to, speak of, and think about other men.

Having eyes only for your husband doesn't really start with your eyes. It begins with your heart and with your mind.

Practice It

If you've developed a habit of comparing your husband negatively to others, either verbally or mentally, turn over a new leaf. If faults must be addressed, do so prayerfully and respectfully without dragging anyone else into the picture.

Day 12—Kiss Him Goodbye

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine.
Song of Songs 1:2

A popular song from over thirty years ago declared, "Because your kiss I can't resist/ Because your kiss is what I miss when I turn out the light." ¹

Shouldn't that be your goal as a wife? To make a habit of kissing your husband so often and so passionately that he would consider your kiss one of the best things in life? To routinely give him the kind of soft, sweet, sensual kisses that he finds irresistible?

A German study found that men whose wives kissed them goodbye every morning were more successful than men who weren't kissed.² In addition, kissing offers many powerful health incentives, including preventing cavities, reducing stress, strengthening immunity, and boosting confidence. ³

And if all that isn't reason enough to smooch your spouse, there is also this: Kissing fulfills a biblical injunction. In 2 Corinthians 13:12, we are told very plainly to "greet one another with a holy kiss."

With so many benefits riding on it, you'll want to pucker up at every opportunity!

Practice It

Get up early enough to brush your teeth and swish a little mouthwash before your husband leaves for work, so you'll be ready to offer him a proper goodbye kiss at the door. And if you're the one who's leaving home and returning later, seek him out before you go, and plant one on him.

1. Hall and Oates, "Your Kiss Is On My List," 1981.

2. Michael Farris, L. Reed Elam, A Sacred Foundation (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2001) pp. 103-104. Internal quote: Dr. Arthur Szabo, quoted in Bible Illustrator on CD-ROM (Hiawatha, IA: Parsons, Technology, 1999).

3. Andrea Demirjian, Kissing: All You Ever Wanted to Know About One of Life's Sweetest Pleasures (New York, NY: Perigee Books, 2006) pp. 177-181.

Day 13—Feed Him His Favorites

Wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart. Psalm 104:15

Some people say that the quickest way to a man's heart is through his stomach. While that statement may not be anatomically or physiologically accurate, your husband obviously does need to eat and, given the choice, would probably prefer to dine on something he enjoys.

Taking his likes and dislikes into account when planning and preparing meals is a thoughtful way to demonstrate love for him and respect for his personal tastes. Of course, this can be a little challenging when they differ vastly from your own. Maybe you can save your favorites for when he's not home, and when he's there, fix things he's sure to enjoy.

Even if you don't cook all the meals you and your husband share, at least learn to cook a few things well. If he has a favorite dish, why not start with that?

There is something nice about preparing food for someone you love—something intimate about investing the time and energy necessary to whip up a delicious, nutritious meal for the man you married.

Practice It

Make a list of your husband's favorite foods. (If you don't already know, ask!) Then do your very best to incorporate as many as practical into your weekly meal plans.

Day 14—Cherish Togetherness

"Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away." Song of Songs 2:10

Some couples assume togetherness will be the status quo after marriage. They expect that if two people live under the same roof, they'll no longer have to work at coordinating schedules and carving out time for each other.

That might be true for the honeymoon, but as soon as a couple gets back home, life's obligations and responsibilities will begin conspiring to distract their attention, steal their time, and dampen their intimacy. Unless husband and wife are both careful to protect, preserve, and cherish their time together, it will slowly be eroded away, and their relationship will suffer as a result.

To keep that from happening, you must be intentional about the time you spend with your husband. Don't let outside activities infringe on your time together as a couple. Seek out your husband's company and cherish the time you get to spend together. Don't ever take that time for granted, but be grateful for it and recognize it for the blessing it is.

Practice It

Set aside time daily to connect with your husband. Maybe over coffee in the morning before children are up and work duties call, or maybe over a warm bath in the evening before you turn in at night. Whatever works for your schedule, use the time as an opportunity to discuss the day's events and your thoughts concerning them; to relate funny or interesting things that happened while you were apart; to summarize the day's accomplishments; to share any concerns, needs, or prayer requests; and to pray together.

Day 15—Don't Complain

Do all things without grumbling or disputing. Philippians 2:14

No one wants to be around a whiner or complainer. It is wearisome, both mentally and emotionally, to listen to the constant grumbings of a perpetually unhappy person. Wise parents understand this fact and train their children to communicate without whining. Our heavenly Father expects no less from us.

This doesn't mean a wife should never appeal for her husband's help with problems, or talk to him about issues that weigh heavily on her mind. Rather, she should simply examine her heart before beginning such a discussion or making such an appeal, to be certain she is doing so in an appreciative, humble, and respectful manner.

Not only should a wife avoid complaining to her husband, she must also resist the urge to complain about him, for the second habit is even more dishonoring than the first.

It all boils down to focus. Are you going to center your thoughts on what is wrong with the world, wrong with your husband, wrong with your home? Or will you choose to look at things with eyes of gratitude, love, and respect?

Practice It

Keep a mental tally for a few days of the positive things you say to your husband vs. any negatives you mention. See how big you can make that ratio.

Day 16—Resist the Urge to Correct

When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent. Proverbs 10:19

Guys crave respect. A man wants to be perceived by others as being knowledgeable and authoritative-yet that's virtually impossible if his wife makes a habit of challenging every word out of his mouth. It makes a man feel foolish to have the things he says called into question. If it happens repeatedly, he may become emotionally withdrawn and stop communicating altogether.

What if it's not his words that need correcting so much as his behavior? Well, if the bothersome behavior is immoral, illegal, or endangering your family, then you may need to enlist the help of a trained professional. But if you're just peeved because your guy keeps leaving the toilet seat up, you should do your best to get over it. After all, your husband could just as easily be annoyed with you.

If you really want to transform your marriage, use each little irritation or annoyance as a signal to pray for your husband and for your marriage. Pray that God would give you patience and understanding and grace and gratitude.

Practice It

What triggers you to climb on a soapbox? Identify the kinds of statements or behaviors that launch you into lecture mode; then think through your reaction beforehand. If the issue is not really that important, let it go. If you feel strongly that it's an issue that needs to be addressed, then speak to your husband privately and calmly about the matter, after the heat of the moment has passed.

Day 17—Dress to Please Him

Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. 1 Peter 3:3–4

Many of us went to great lengths to look good before we got married. Why? Because we were trying to attract our guy's attention. Why do we seem to think that once we marry, we can stop trying? Don't you want your man to be proud to show you off in public? Don't you want to keep your husband captivated?

Then dress the part. This doesn't mean you have to clean your house in a cocktail dress and stiletto heels, nor do you need to wear things you detest or find uncomfortable. But you should take care of your appearance and consider dressing in a way that pleases the man you married.

Looking our best encompasses much more than what clothes we put on our bodies. Our appearance is more than our apparel. Our attitudes and deportment speak volumes, revealing not only what we think of ourselves but how we regard those around us . . . including our husbands.

Sprucing up for your husband and treating him like a man is not only good for him and good for your marriage—it's good for you as well. Doesn't it make you feel strong and confident and desirable when you flash your husband a knowing smile and his heart gives a little flutter in response? You captivated his attention before marriage. Why not make an effort to turn his head again?

Practice It

Ask your husband to go through your closet and remove any clothes he doesn't like to see you wear or doesn't feel are flattering to you. If there's a particular color or style he likes to see you in, stock up on clothes that fit that description.

Day 18—Keep the House Tidy

She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Proverbs 31:27

To the best of your abilities, try to maintain a clean and orderly home. God holds us accountable for everything entrusted to our care (including our house), and He expects us to use it in a way that blesses those around us and glorifies Him.

Here, as in so many other things, there is a need for balance. Keeping a tidy house should be a means to an end, not the end goal itself. You can view housekeeping as a way to serve God by being a good steward over what He has given you and to care for your family by creating a pleasant place for each one to live.

Keeping an immaculate house (in the strictest sense of the word) is not really possible this side of heaven, so it's futile to make that our goal. Keeping a tidy house, on the other hand, is entirely achievable—even while maintaining a proper and loving attitude toward everyone who lives there.

Practice It

Multi-task when possible. Fold a load of laundry or clean out a drawer while you're stuck on the phone. Clean as you go when cooking, emptying the dishwasher while you wait for water to boil or wiping down counters while the soup is simmering.

Day 19—Be Content

I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. Philippians 4:11

Do you want to communicate respect for your husband? Then don't make him feel like he has to keep up with the Joneses to make you happy. Take satisfaction in the lifestyle he is able to provide for you, and find hope in the future the two of you are seeking to build together.

Financial strain can be deadly to a marriage, regardless of which spouse is bringing home the paycheck, so always be careful to live within your means. Don't let money issues divide you. Instead, use lean times as an opportunity to pull together, to buckle down, to exercise resourcefulness, and to think creatively through ways you might better your circumstances.

Each hardship you face as a couple can serve to further cement your love and appreciation for each other, if only you'll keep counting your blessings and working as a team to meet the challenges life brings your way, content that God has a purpose and a plan for every one of them.

Practice It

A wise person once observed, "Contentment isn't about having what you want, but about wanting what you have." Whenever you feel like focusing on all the things you don't have, make a list of everything you do have, and thank God for blessing you.

Day 20—Take His Advice

Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future.
Proverbs 19:20

A woman will often get perturbed when her husband launches into "fix-it mode" instead of simply providing a sympathetic ear when she needs it. When she's upset about something, she interprets this hasty rush to a solution as evidence that her husband doesn't really understand the situation, doesn't fully appreciate the distress it has caused her, or can't adequately feel her pain.

We have to realize, however, that this is a husband's way of sympathizing. It causes him distress to see his wife in pain.¹ Mentally searching for a solution is his way of communicating that distress, of proving to her he cares, of expressing heartfelt empathy in the way that comes most naturally to him.

With that in mind, try listening to your husband's counsel and accepting his advice. He's offering you a fresh perspective, a different vantage point. So hear him out, then do your best to implement his most reasonable recommendations.

Taking your husband's advice does not mean you're incapable of thinking through problems or coming up with solutions on your own. It just means you're willing to consider his perspective and give his way a try.

Practice It

Next time your husband launches into fix-it mode, don't bristle. Take a deep breath and remind yourself that his brain is wired differently than yours. Listen to his suggestions and implement whichever seems most reasonable. Don't forget to thank him for his help!

¹ Louann Brizendine, *The Male Brain* (New York, NY: Broadway Books, 2010) p. 96.

Day 21—Admire Him

As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. Song of Songs 2:3

Think back to what first attracted you to your husband. Chances are, at least a few of those traits are still there, so take time to notice and comment on them.

Voiced compliments and heartfelt praise are always welcome, but you should also make it your habit to just look at your husband in a respectful, appreciative way. Think kind thoughts toward him. He'll be able to see the admiration in your eyes.

Not only do our husbands want to be told we admire them, but they want to be told why. Nobody likes being taken for granted, so let him know you think he's awesome. Be as specific, as generous, and as sincere as you can with the compliments, and his appreciation for you will soar!

Practice It

Text your husband every day for a week, thanking him each day for a different character quality you admire.

Day 22—Guard His Reputation

An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rotteness in his bones. Proverbs 12:4

How does your husband's reputation fare among your friends? When you are out with the girls or gabbing with coworkers, do you build him up or run him down?

Your husband is at your mercy. You know him more intimately than anyone else on the planet. How will you use that knowledge? Will you choose to be a crown or a curse to him?

Whether or not you appreciate the fact, your husband's reputation is of paramount importance to him. Most guys say they'd rather feel unloved than disrespected.¹ For ages, men have even fought duels for the sake of their honor.

Your husband's good name is your good name, too (and vice versa), so guard it well. Honor him in the way you speak of him to family and friends. Protect his reputation. Don't let minor irritations or disagreements at home tempt you to badmouth him in public. Live in such a way that others will have no trouble understanding why your husband married you in the first place.

Practice It

If you were to meet a new group of friends who asked you to tell them something about your husband, what would you say? Think through a few personal anecdotes that illustrate his most admirable qualities, and then next time you're given the opportunity, you'll know just how to answer!

¹ Shaunti Feldhahn, *For Women Only: What You Need to Know About the Inner Lives of Men* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Publishers, 2004) p. 23.

Day 23—Forgive His Shortcomings

"Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." Mark 11:25

Bitterness, when given room to grow, will eat away at your soul like a cancer. When harbored against your spouse, a grudge will slowly suck the life out of your marriage. Left unchecked, it will destroy your love, your joy, your peace, and will ultimately leave your home and family in shambles.

To keep this from happening, we must learn to extend forgiveness-not because our spouse deserves it (any more than we do), but because God has commanded us to do so.

Let go of any bitterness or resentment over wrongs, real or imagined. No marriage can thrive in a hostile environment of judgment and constant criticism, so forgive your husband freely, just as Christ has forgiven you.

Your husband will fall short; he is only human. But don't use that as an excuse to mistreat him. You must forgive and keep forgiving; you must love and keep loving; you must respect and keep respecting-because this is what it will take for your marriage to bloom and thrive.

Practice It

Next time you catch yourself thinking about some way your husband has offended you, recently or long past, take a moment to pray for him. And while you're at it, pray for yourself. Confess your reluctance or inability to forgive him, and ask for God's help in doing so.

Day 24—Don't Argue

The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out. Proverbs 17:14

Most likely, you're not always going to see eye-to-eye with your husband. When there are areas of disagreement or concerns that need to be discussed, take care to do so in a calm, cool, collected, and consistently respectful way.

Communicating respect to your husband does not necessitate keeping all your thoughts to yourself. Showing respect is not about suppressing your feelings; it's really more about the tone with which those feelings are expressed.

A disrespectful tone communicates, "Listen, you idiot, let me set you straight on this matter, because it's obvious you don't know what you're talking about." Of course, we would (hopefully) never actually say such a thing, but our husbands will sometimes hear these words in our tone, even when we don't utter them outright.

A respectful tone, by contrast, first hears the other person out. It always gives thoughtful consideration to what is being said, even if the speaker isn't able to articulate his ideas as easily as you yourself might be able to do.

Whatever the situation, weigh your words carefully, always and only speaking the truth in love.

Practice It

Avoid discussing anything while tempers are hot. Bite your tongue until things cool down, then come back to the table once you've both had time to think and pray about the matter at hand.

Day 25—Follow His Lead

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Colossians 3:18

The principle of biblical submission gets a bad rap in modern times, but it isn't as defunct a concept as its opponents would have us believe. Everyone routinely submits to someone, whether it be a boss, a professor, or a law enforcement officer.

Submission isn't about lack of equality or intelligence or abilities or worth; it's about authority and practicality and responsibility and structure. If it weren't for our willingness to subject ourselves to a governing authority in order to achieve a higher goal, society would cease to function. We'd have nothing but anarchy and chaos. Any semblance of law and order would be wiped completely away.

The same is true for a family. When Mom and Dad are at odds with one another and the children refuse to listen or obey, things can get chaotic pretty quickly.

God commands wives to respect their husbands, husbands to love their wives, and children to obey their parents (Eph. 5:22-6:4). He calls men to lead their families with integrity, patience, understanding, and self-sacrifice (Col. 3:18-20).

Neither a body nor a family can function well with two heads. So learn to defer to your husband's wishes and let final decisions rest with him. Treat him with deference and respect and understanding, because that is what God requires of you, and by doing this, you honor Him.

Practice It

Some wives hesitate to follow their husband's lead because they are afraid of the direction their husband may take. While this concern is understandable, it does not negate our responsibility. God alone can change your husband's heart, but He may be waiting to do that until you let Him change yours.

Day 26—Foster Respect in Your Children

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you." Exodus 20:12

Any honor you attempt to bestow on your husband will be eclipsed if the children in your home are allowed to ignore, disobey, or speak disrespectfully to him.

Do your part to ensure this does not happen. Model respect for your husband in front of your children, and insist on it from them. Speak highly of him, both in his presence and when he is absent. Show sincere appreciation for all he does for the family, and teach your children to be grateful and to thank him, too.

Be careful to present a united front in matters of child training, chores, and discipline, so as not to pit one parent against the other in their minds. When your husband asks you to do something, respond cheerfully and immediately so that your children can learn from your good example.

Practice It

Never grouse and grumble about your husband in front of your children. Instead, focus on the positive, and build him up in their eyes. Say things like, "Aren't we blessed to have a daddy that _____?" [works so hard for us, plans special surprises for us, takes such good care of us, loves us so much, wants to spend time with us, etc.]. Point out your husband's best qualities to your children as often as you can.

Day 27—Don't Overschedule Him

Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. Psalm 90:12

Being respectful of your husband should include being respectful of his time. Do your best to preserve enough margin that he has time to relax and enjoy life away from the office.

Do you keep the family calendar? Don't get involved in extracurricular activities or responsibilities without your husband's knowledge and approval. Be especially careful to consult him before committing to anything that would require his involvement or would leave him home alone while you and/or the children participate.

It is not uncommon for families to become so busy-with every member going in a different direction every night of the week-that no time is left for spending together or even just sitting down at the dinner table to share a simple meal.

That kind of overload can be detrimental not only to the physical and mental health of the people involved, but to the overall health of your home and marriage as well. Resist the urge to equate busyness with fulfillment. Slow down, and enjoy life a little more.

Practice It

Sit down with your husband and look over your calendar and commitments together. Discuss which activities are important enough to continue and which could or should be dropped for the sake of slowing down and maintaining a more sustainable pace. Try to leave a little white space on your calendar each week-days where there are no outside obligations demanding your time and attention.

Day 28—Bite Your Tongue

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.
Ephesians 4:29

A very insightful person once observed, "The difference between a successful marriage and a mediocre one consists of leaving about three things a day unsaid."

That is undoubtedly true! The book of Proverbs tells us repeatedly that a wise person watches what he says, and by so doing preserves his life (13:3), keeps himself out of trouble (21:23), and demonstrates great understanding (17:27).

There are some things a husband and wife should never say to each other and some tones of voice they should never take with each other. This is not about repressing feelings; it is about choosing to put on love and purposing to treat your husband with courtesy and respect (Col. 3:8; 4:6).

Practice It

Next time a snide or cutting remark pops into your head, resist the urge to speak it. Search for something positive and encouraging to say instead. Practice this habit, not only toward your husband and children, but in your church and community as well. That old adage our parents taught us is a good (and biblical!) principle to live by: "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all."

Day 29—Guard Against Pride

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Proverbs 16:18

The Bible warns us that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). Husbands tend to resist pride, too. Pride is very off-putting to everyone, but especially to the ones who must live with us.

In fact, if we traced most marital arguments back to their roots, we'd likely find that pride was somehow involved. It was Satan's original sin, and it has been tripping up humans since the beginning of time.

Don't be full of yourself. Relate to your husband with a spirit of humility and grace.

Do you want your home to be filled to overflowing with love, joy, peace, and all the rest of the fruit of the Spirit? Then you should start by sweeping the pride out of every corner, closet, and crevice, and tossing it into the trash bin where it belongs.

Practice It

Next time you are tempted to pick a fight with your husband, examine your heart instead. Search for any traces of pride, then confess and forsake your arrogant ways. (Please note, search your own heart for pride. You do not earn extra points for identifying pride in your husband's heart!)

Day 30—Never Give Up

Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9

No matter how strong your marriage, you are not immune to attack-and no matter how desperate your situation, there is hope in Christ. Be vigilant. Be prayerful. Do not grow weary in investing the time and energy needed to make your relationship with your husband grow and flourish.

It is significant that the first miracle Jesus performed publicly was turning water into wine at a marriage feast in Cana. Do you remember what was said by the headwaiter when he tasted the results? He marveled to the bridegroom, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now" (John 2:10).

Precious sister, is your heart empty? Are you all used up? Has your marriage run dry?

Then turn it over to Jesus now. Do exactly as He bids. He is still in the business of performing miracles, and He can so transform your life and marriage that you will marvel, Wow! He saved the very best for last!

Practice It

Just as we must not grow weary in doing good, we must not grow weary of praying. If your marriage is strong and healthy, thank God for that fact and ask His continued blessing and protection. If your marriage is in trouble, ask God to grant you wisdom and grace as you do your part to save it. Pray that He would plant the same desire for a better relationship deep in the heart of your husband. And pray that the Lord would cause both of you "to increase and abound in love for one another" (1 Thess. 3:12).

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