American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org November 2015 Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts

Love and Respect: Basics for Marriage

by Douglas Wilson from DesiringGod.org



Scripture teaches us that Christians should honor or respect all men (1 Peter 2:17). Every human being bears the image of God. and so, of course, we are called on to respect and honor that. And of course, Scripture also teaches us to love our neighbor (Lev. 19:18), and Jesus in his famous story makes the point that our neighbor is whatever person God has placed right in front of us (Luke 10:29-37). So all Christians are to love everyone, and all Christians should honor evervone. That is the baseline.

But when we come down to the particular relationship of husbands to wives. and wives to husbands. Scripture gives us an important, additional emphasis. Husbands are told it up? specifically to love their wives as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25). Wives are told specifically (Ephesians 5:33).

we can take away from this. The lessons are not limited to three, but we should make a point of grasping at least these three things.

1. We Are Called to Love and Respect

First, the commands are husbands. A woman can directed to our respective and relative weaknesses. We are told to do things that we might not do unless we were told. For example, children are told to obey their parents because it is easy for children not to do so (Ephesians 6:1). In the same way, husbands are told to love their wives because it is easy for husbands not to do so. Wives are told to honor their husbands because it is easy for wives not to do so. We are called to do things that might not occur to us. If is what a wedding means. we were all doing these things naturally, why bring

Women are better at loving than men are. Men do well at respecting. C.S. Lewis to respect their husbands once observed that womas the church does Christ en think of love as taking trouble for others — which is much closer to a scrip-There are three things that tural agape love than what men naturally do. Men tend to think of love as not giving trouble to others.

> So men must be called to sacrifice for their wives, to take trouble for them, as Christ gave himself for the church. Women must be urged to respect their naturally love a man she does not honor or respect very much, and this is something that Paul would identify as a trouble. How many times have we heard a terrible story about a girl returning to her abusive boyfriend because she "loves him," even though he treats her like dirt? But if we asked her if she respects him, she would reply, "Are you kidding? Him?" And men must be called to give themselves away for their wives. This

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So men must be called to sacrifice for their wives, to take trouble for them, as Christ gave himself for the church. Women must be urged to respect their husbands. A woman can naturally love a man she does not honor or respect very much, and this is something that Paul would identify as a trouble. How many times have we heard a terrible story about a girl returning to her abusive boyfriend because she "loves him," even though he treats her like dirt? But if we asked her if she respects him, she would reply, "Are you kidding? Him?" And men must be called to give themselves away for their wives. This is what a wedding means.

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2. Men Run on Respect, Women on Love

Second, the command reveals something about the George Bernard Shaw Husbands cannot duplineeds of the recipient. In once observed that we other words, if the Bible should not do unto others said that shepherds should feed the sheep, a reason- unto us — their tastes may able inference would be not be the same as ours. I that sheep need food. When husbands are told got his wife a nice shotgun to love their wives, we can for Christmas. She was a infer from this that wives shrewd Christian womneed to be loved. When an, and so the following wives are told to respect Christmas, she got him a their husbands, we can in- nice string of pearls. And fer from this that husbands as she told my wife, "they need to be respected. were very nice pearls." Think of it as two kinds of car that run on differ- Often when a marriage is in ent kinds of fuel — diesel and regular, say. Men run on respect, and wives run on love.

In saying this, remember that we are talking about emphasis. On a basic level, everyone needs to be loved and everyone needs to be respected. But when Scripture singles out husbands and wives living together, the men are told to love and the women are told to respect. Flip this around, and you see that men should remember that their wives need to be loved, and their wives should remember that kind of love is efficacious.

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us from giving what we would like to be getting. as we would have them do once knew a husband who

a tough spot, both spouses tend to give what they feel they need — love and rereach out to their husbands with love, when respect is respect. Peter tells us that what would really help. reverent and chaste be-Husbands can back away, havior can break down a thinking of this as a form of respect, "giving space," when what they need to do is close in with love.

3. Both Are Powerful to **Produce Change**

But third — here is where ing on their marriages, the it gets glorious — love and respect are both potent. The Bible teaches that this

their husbands need to be This kind of respect is powerful. This sort of love bestows loveliness. This Remembering this keeps kind of respect bestows respectability.

cate the love of Christ, which efficaciously made his bride lovely. While we were vet sinners. Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). But while we cannot duplicate this kind of love, husbands are told to imitate it. And in imitating it, we see some of the comparable effects. A woman who is loved by her husband is a woman who will grow in loveliness. He washes her with the water of the word (Ephesians 5:26). The entire passage assumes that this kind of love bestows loveliness. And the same spect, respectively. Wives kind of potency can be found in a godly woman's man's disobedient spirit (1 Peter 3:1-2).

> So then, men and women should love and respect each other. They should do so with all their hearts. But when they are concentratmen should lean into love. The women should lean into respect. The results can be astonishing.

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> Often when a marriage is in a tough spot, both spouses tend to give what they feel they need — love and respect, respectively. Wives reach out to their husbands with love, when respect is

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This kind of respect is powerful. This sort of love bestows loveliness. This kind of respect bestows respectability.

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So then, men and women should love and respect each other. They should do so with all their hearts. But when they are concentrating on their marriages, the men should lean into love. The women should lean into respect. The results can be astonishing.