



## Unconditional Respect

by Lloyd Biddle

*In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.*

*1 Peter 3:1-2*

My favorite hobby is reading. I used to play golf a fair amount of the time, but when my sons were born and began to grow, I found out that my free time was scarce. These days, if I play two of three times a year, I have been out a lot. But I can read early in the morning, sometimes as early as 4 am. The house is quiet and there is nothing and no one to disturb me. Other than early mornings, I have found that Saturday's are also good reading days, provided I don't have too many kid's activities to run to. I just finished a great book on marriage entitled, **Love and Respect**, by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs. Drs. Dave and Chris Easton, professional counselors who attend my church in Madison, highly recommended the book to me about a year ago. I finally got around to reading it and I am so glad I did.

Dr. Eggerichs expounds on a great number of biblical principles designed to help men and women build happier and healthier marriages, but the most profound teaching he sets forth from scripture is the Bible's call for women to give their husbands unconditional respect. For years, Bible teachers and marriage counselors have rightly taught God's command for husbands to give their wives unconditional love. Husbands are told to love their wives *"as Christ loved the church"*. We know that Christ loved the church so much that He laid down his life to establish it and nurture it into maturity. In the same manner, husbands ought to lay down their lives in service to their wives regardless of how they are treated. Every wife I have ever met has said, *"Amen"*, when they hear this very important and foundational biblical truth about marriage taught. However, when you talk to wives about God's command to them to give their husbands unconditional respect, you hear a very different response from many of them. *"My respect, they retort, "must be earned."* And although this sounds logical and right, from the biblical perspective on how to build a successful marriage, this kind of thinking comes up short. In 1 Peter chapter 3, the apostle Peter tells women who are married to unsaved husbands that they may be able to lead their husbands to the Lord, if they respect and submit to their husbands. He reasons in 1 Peter 3: 3-4: *"Do not let your beauty be that outward adorning of arranging the hair, of wearing gold, or of putting on fine apparel; but let it be the hidden*

*person of the heart, with the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God."* Now if the scripture teaches that a Christian wife of an unsaved husband is to treat her husband with respect and honor, how much more so should the Christian wife treat a godly husband?

The typical wife I have met loves her husband and wants to show him proper respect. But how does she go about doing so? Let me make a few suggestions. First, start by telling your husband specific things you admire about him. Most husbands I know work extremely hard to provide for and protect their families. Wives, when is the last time you sincerely thanked your husband for that? Most husbands I know make a special effort to attend their children's extracurricular activities to show them love and support. Tell your husband that you appreciate him for staying involved in his children's lives. Many husbands I know are good at working around the house (not me, by the way); some are very supportive of their wife's goals and dreams and are a positive influence on their communities. Every husband I have ever met has something in him that is to be admired. And wives, I will tell you a very important secret. A very large part of your husband's self-esteem and joy is tied to your willingness to respect and appreciate him for who he is and what he does. When your husband feels disrespected and under-appreciated at home, it wounds his spirit.

Wives, you might say to yourself, *"Well if he loves me right, if he would meet my needs, it would be so much easier for me to respect him."* And you are right. But if you walk by faith and respect him as God has called you to anyway, you may be very surprised at the love with which he responds to you. Why not give it a try? For a week, do all that you can to show him respect. Tell him in written and spoken words what you appreciate about him. Avoid criticizing or badgering him and instead encourage him and lift him up. If you try this, you just might see a side of your husband you did not know existed. You might inspire him to perform acts of love and service that you only dreamed he would be willing to do. You just might help your good marriage, get better or your fragile marriage, find renewed strength.

In 1 Samuel 25, the Bible records the story of a foolish man named Nabal who was married to a wise woman named Abigail. Nabal was a rich businessman who owned 3,000 sheep. While his hired men tended his sheep in the wilderness, David and his mighty men watched over Nabal's shepherds and his sheep making sure no sheep were lost. A short time later, David was wandering in the wilderness hiding from King Saul who sought to kill him and David sent a message to Nabal asking for a little food. Nabal refused, insulting David and his men in the process. When Abigail found out, she hastened to prepare bread, wine, meat, grain, raisins and cakes for David and his men. Abigail remembered the kindness David showed her husband Nabal and that David had surely been chosen by God to be ruler over Israel. She ran to meet David who was coming out swiftly from his hiding place to deal with Nabal about his wickedness. When

she met David, she bowed down before him and pled with him to accept her small gift and forgive the sins of her house. David, moved by this gracious woman's humble display of respect, accepted her gift and sent her away in peace. The next day, God struck Nabal with a fatal illness and he died within 10 days. David, impressed by the honor and respect that Abigail had shown him, asked for her hand in marriage. This story demonstrates that a woman, who sincerely honors and appreciates a man, wins his heart. This kind of woman is a precious and beautiful thing to behold. When a man's wife treats him with respect, he cannot resist her. Won't you continue to win the heart of your husband by willingly and lovingly honoring and appreciating him?