

Romantically Challenged Part 2 - Men From Mars 02.20.11

Ephesians 5:25-33 ESV

Video: "Romantically Challenged - Part 1" [2:49] by Skit Guys

Introduction: We laugh at that (video) because we are laughing at ourselves. I think any guy who has honestly tried to romance his wife at some time or another has come to this point where he just doesn't "get it." And the same for the gals. Sometimes you wonder if it's really true that men are from Mars and women are from Venus because in some key areas we really are different.

Personal Illustration: I know this is a generalization about guys wanting to fix things and our wives wanting us to listen. But it's really true in my case most of the time. I say most of the time, because the truth is much more complicated than the reality. Sometimes Mary Kay wants me to offer suggestions and NOT just listen. I've learned not to try to read the tea leaves and just ask!

Two Things to Understand First:

1 - It may seem like **Men Are From Mars**, but really God **MADE THEM DIFFERENTLY** and **EXPECTS DIFFERENT THINGS** from them.

We are not from different planets, but God did create us differently. We have the evidence of the Genesis story of Adam and Eve. And we have the ongoing evidence of both Biblical example and personal observation, that *in general* men and women just think and feel differently about things. This is a generalization. Remember our lesson last weekend that you should become a student of your husband or wife and learn about them specifically - how do they respond? How do they think? How do they feel?

We also see, from the Bible, that - in some respects - God expects different things from men and women. There are many areas where He expects the same thing - like here, we are to both be submissive to one another (v. 24). We are both to love God and one another. We are both to be serving. We only need to go down through the list of 1 Corinthians 13 to see the things we are both responsible for - patience, kindness, forbearance, belief and hope, not being arrogant, rude, selfish, or rejoicing at wrong doing.

However, we should also recognize that our very created bodies provide differences. Only women can have the gift of motherhood. We find in these passages that men also have the responsibility for spiritual and family leadership. We'll talk more about this next week, **but for now we need to understand one other thing...**

2 - Submission has nothing to do with the **ORDER** of authority, but rather governs the **OPERATION** of authority, how it is given and how it is received.

Ultimately, there has to be an order to things. In any organization, government, school, military, church AND family, there must be a "The buck stops here" concept to decision making. We're told in verse 25 that Christ is the head of the church and that the husband is the head of the family. That's the ORDER of authority.

Now no one would quibble with the idea that there must be a “head” to the church and that it must be Christ. Which one of us would say, “no wait... Church Requel is MY church. We need to do it MY way?” Why? Because of the love Christ has and for what he has done... His sacrifice! And husbands also have that responsibility in the family. The way Jesus leads is the OPERATION of authority...

Is it possible that the reason there may occasionally be an argument about who is the head is the very reason that husbands don't demonstrate the same love for their wives that Christ has demonstrated to the church? When the disciples argued amongst themselves about who was the greatest (See Luke 22:24-27), Jesus' response was that we shouldn't allow our leadership to “lord it over” others and that the greatest among us be the one who SERVES!

That's why Paul instructs in Romans 12:10 that our love should drive us to work to “outdo one another in showing honor.” E. Peterson:

“Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.”
Romans 12:10 MSG

Playing “second fiddle” when you have the first position by right of authority TAKES PRACTICE! It doesn't come naturally. But it takes practice to be able to...

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit,
but in humility consider others better than yourselves.”
Philippians 2:3 NIV

Guys, you know the hardest place to put this “consider others better than yourself” to work? Not the work place. Not with friends. Not with church folk. It's with family... with our wives! I'm convinced that if we husbands mastered the skill of humility, putting the needs of our wives ahead of our own, loving them as Christ loved the church...

we'd never ever have an order of authority problem at home!
Our wives would LOVE to submit to us as the Word instructs them. And you would LOVE the way you are loved too. IOW, if you get the OPERATION of authority (submission) right, you'll never have a problem with the ORDER of authority (submission). **So how do we go about romancing our wives? Three ways...**

Three Romances of a Husband

#1. A husband should romance his wife with a **SACRIFICIAL** love.

“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,” Ephesians 5:25 ESV

The first way of romancing is tough. Because it's sacrificial. None of us can duplicate for our wives exactly what Christ has done for the church. It does, however, set the model. The night before his crucifixion Jesus prayed, “Not my will but thine.” He put aside his own desires... his own way... to seek God's way. **Love's 1st lesson:**

(Love) “does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful.”
1 Corinthians 13:5 ESV

This is not easy, but men... we set the tone for the family. It's not a matter of fault... it's a matter of responsibility. If the tone of the family is irritation or resentment or keeping a record of wrongs, then it begins/ends with us. When we set the standard NOT of what we think is right compared to our spouse BUT RATHER the standard of Christ and His church, we can find the way to love her sacrificially.

- #2. A husband should romance his wife with a **SANCTIFYING** love.
“that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”
Ephesians 5:26-27 ESV

ἁγιάζω (hagiazō) - to sanctify, to set apart, to make holy, to consecrate; Adjective - holy; Noun - Saint; Verb - sanctify.

Guys, it is your job to set your wife aside as special. She should know - from you - that she is the most beautiful, holy, splendid creature in all the world. Just as Christ presents the church to himself, you are to present your wife to the world and to yourself **without spot or wrinkle! Ever wonder what that means?**

“**without spot**” - caused by *defilements from the outside*, from the world. The husband should DEFEND AND PROTECT his wife from the world’s continuous destruction of her value and position. As best you can, stand between her and the world when it is harmful to her. Also the husband should CLEAN UP THE MESS. Sometimes our wives must work, must be in the world, must take the put-downs of customers, fellow employees, bosses... unmeetable expectations, pressures. We must continuously be speaking words of healing and affirmation... continuously be sensitive to her day and what’s gone on.

“**without wrinkle**” - caused by *decay from the inside*. Body is constantly decaying. Growth is needed to keep the body younger. In same way husband should continuously speak words of growth and encouragement into the life of his wife. This is much more difficult than “without spot,” much more pervasive - hangs on and won’t let go. May have much to do with her youth and her father and / or her former relationship. She may just have a “I’m not worth anything” attitude. This could take years of continuous affirmation & love, and maybe professional counseling - which you should gladly pay for!

Two personal applications. I’ve been guilty of and have learned the hard way and have worked to correct... - #1) things said in arguments score points now at the cost of years of memories; #2) public put-downs that make me look good at her expense. Cut it out! You are damaging your very own, most precious relationship, leads us to...

- #3. A husband should romance his wife with a **SATISFYING** love.
“In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.”
Ephesians 5:28-30 ESV

You want to treat your wife as if she is the most treasured possession, the most valuable asset, the best part of who you are - a lifetime of investment with an unbelievable return on investment. Nothing in finance is as rewarding. No tech gadget is as compelling. No friend will ever be as sympathetic. No job could ever promote you as well. No exercise could make you feel better. You treat your wife right and you are treating yourself right! Quite literally you take care of your wife as you would (should) take care of yourself. She is quite literally “flesh of your flesh,” as much a part of you as any part of your body!

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh.”
Ephesians 5:31 / Genesis 2:24 ESV

The instructions to “leave” and to “cleave” (KJV) “hold fast” (ESV) “united” (NIV) come down to this unity. It’s not JUST sexual. It’s ONENESS of every part of the relationship - financial, schedules, family. With Mary Kay and me, it’s even a part of our diet and exercise. When one of us is doing well - the other does better. When one of us slacks off, we tend to both slack off.

Conclusion: This romancing of your wife is SACRIFICIAL and SANCTIFYING - not always easy, but in the long run it is incredibly SATISFYING! Guys, I know this is NOT EASY. I have not done it perfectly. In fact I will admit to you that I’ve made some incredibly bad mistakes along the way. Honestly, it’s only by the grace of God and my Mary Kay’s tremendous patience with me that we’ve made it almost 32 years.

I remind you of the outline for our first talk in the “Romantically Challenged” series:

- 1) *Real Romance Seeks the Best for Someone Else.* Everything we’ve been talking about today - sacrificially, sanctifying, and satisfying starts with seeking the best for your wife. This will not come about without difficulty. In fact, it may be impossible for you to really do this on your own. **That’s why...**
- 2) *Real Romance requires God’s help and pleasure.* You will need to keep up your total reliance upon God’s Spirit giving you the strength and desire to be the true, real, romantic husband He has created you to be. Real romance takes God’s help **and also...**
- 3) *Real Romance require intention and action.* You won’t come about loving sacrificially and sanctifying and satisfying - in a haphazard, accidental, “I do it when I feel like it” manner. You have to take the lead in being the romantic. And that means a whole lot more than just bringing flowers home.

One more thing... intention and action may also mean that you need some outside help. You may need to partner with someone else who has been around the block a few times to give you some advice, a mentor. You may need to get together with a professional, who can give you some solid advice. I’m talking about marriage counseling.

Personal Illustration: After 15 years, Mary Kay and I began moving in two different directions in our married lives. She was growing in a way I had never imagined. As a result we needed help. I wish I could tell you I took the lead. Mary Kay sought the help and brought me in. It was the best thing we ever did for our marriage relationship!

Maybe you don’t need mentoring, or counseling... Maybe you just need to hang out with some other guys, who are also on this married romance journey along side of you. **Maybe, like we saw at the beginning, you need to join a “Romantically Challenged” group.**

Play “Romantically Challenged Part 2” [3:49] by Skit Guys. Pray.