6 Ways to Lead and Love Your Wife

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Marriage is an imperfect picture of a perfect reality. In Ephesians 5, the apostle Paul explains that God designed marriage to be a metaphor for a divine truth, giving our watching world a glimpse of what it's like to be loved by Jesus.

God wants to use every marriage to display his beauty and grandeur. But how? In part, by husbands leading and loving their wives in godly, nourishing, Christlike ways.

Here are six practical ways a husband can do this.

1. Ask Good Questions

Proverbs 20:5 says, "The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out." Asking your wife intentional questions is a way you can learn about the state of her soul. As a start, here are four questions you should ask your wife on a regular basis:

- How are you encouraged in your faith and life right now?
- How are you discouraged in your faith and life right now?
- How can I pray for you?
- How can I grow as a husband, father, and Christian?

2. Serve Your Wife

Ask yourself daily, "*What can I do today to make my wife's day easier"?* Perhaps it's doing the laundry, washing the dishes, taking the kids to soccer practice, or making dinner. Your home is not only a refuge for relaxation, but also a context to serve.

Husband, remember that Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45). He didn't kick off his shoes and demand that we cater to his every need. On the contrary, he washed feet, cared for little kids, and comforted weary people. In the same way, remember that your home is not only a refuge for relaxation, but also a context to serve. Look for creative ways each day to serve your wife at home.

3. Make Time for Your Marriage

If you do not *make* time for your marriage, you will not *have* time for your marriage. Life is busy. We must be intentional about prioritizing marital health by instituting calendar rhythms. If we don't intentionally schedule rhythms for marriage strengthening, our marriages will likely suffer. This will look different for each couple, depending on their season of life, but here are some of the rhythms my wife and I have in our marriage:

- Pray daily (typically at night)
- Date weekly (typically Friday nights)
- Escape monthly (all-day thing)
- Getaway quarterly (one overnight)
- Retreat annually (several days together)

Plan regular touch points with your wife—and put them on the calendar.

4. Study Your Wife

The apostle Peter tells husbands to "live with your wives in an understanding way" (1 Pet. 3:7). One way we do this is by studying our wives. Do you know your wife's heart as well as you know the statistics of your favorite sports team? If I asked you for your wife's *current* likes, dislikes, and dreams, would you have an answer? You will never learn about these things unless you (1) are intentional in conversation with her and (2) listen more than you talk.

So, put down the remote, your phone, or whatever keeps you from talking meaningfully with your wife, and invite her into concentrated conversation. Model James 1:19 in your marriage. Study your wife by listening to her.

5. Learn and Grow Together

Healthy marriages are characterized by a mutual desire for spousal growth. We don't love our spouse by accepting them "as they are" so much as we point them to become more like Jesus. A keyway you love your wife, then, is by prioritizing opportunities to learn and grow with her. Read a book or listen to a lecture together. Go to a conference or discuss Sunday's sermon.

Husbands, God calls us to lead our wives into spiritual flourishing. Labor to find creative ways to grow and learn together to that end.

6. Be Intoxicated in Her Love

Proverbs 5:19 is one of my favorite verses on marriage: "Be intoxicated always in her love." The word translated "be intoxicated" is used elsewhere in the Old Testament for a man staggering down the street in drunkenness (Isa. 28:7). The point is for a man to be *crazy* in love with his wife. Ray Ortlund says of this verse:

This counsel is not trivial. It is the serious wisdom of God, because, as we shall see later in the Bible, marriage points ultimately to the love of Christ and our joy in him. And the striking thing about this wisdom here in Proverbs, coming from ancient times as it does, is that marriages back then could be arranged for economic or political reasons. But the Bible sweeps all of that aside and calls husbands and wives to be head-over-heels in love with each other.

How can you be "head over heels" in love with your wife? Here are a few suggestions:

- Remind her *why* you're in love with her. Write her a card and list specific reasons why you treasure her.
- Affirm her before others. Esteem your wife in the presence of others by directing their attention to visible graces in her life.
- Surprise her with acts of kindness. Take the kids and send her out with friends for the night. Show up to her workplace with flowers. Leave her a card before you leave for work.
- Encourage her with how you see God at work in her life. Take her on a date and tell her, slowly and specifically, how you see growing in her faith. Is she becoming more patient, wise, kind, bold, holy? Tell her and watch her faith fan into flame.

Scripture says husbands should be so in love with their wives that the watching world thinks they're drunk on love. May it be so of us.