

Valentine's

Ephesians 5:33

Introduction

It has been some time since we had a study focused on making our marriages better. Recently I picked up a couple of books that I had bought a year or so ago and was amazed at what they said. And amazed that I could be so clueless about some pretty obvious stuff at age 52 and after 25 years of marriage! The books are: *For Men Only*, by Shaunti and Jeff Feldhahn, and *For Women Only*, by Shaunti Feldhahn. Today I want to just talk about the first topic from each of the books. One thing I really like about the books, and that sets them apart from most, is that they present the research from relatively large surveys and then apply it.

BTW, we will have a Scripture passage today, but it will be at the end.

For Men: The Deal Is Never Closed!

Men, to you, your marriage feels like the most obviously closed deal in your whole life. But your wife doesn't **feel** permanently loved once the marriage papers are signed. (Note the word feel. That's the key.)

For us, the old saying is kind of what we think: "I told you I loved you when I married you. If anything changes I'll let you know."

But a woman needs to be reassured of our love often, daily. **There is a latent insecurity about whether their man really loves them and even whether they are truly lovable.** "Would he choose me all over again?" And if she doesn't feel loved, she will begin to show signs of distress.

We're not talking about what she knows logically, but rather about the feeling that rises up when something triggers it.

Guys, to help you understand this: It is very similar to what most of us feel about our job. Even though we do a good job and have been kept around for a while and have no sense that things are going south, there is still for many of us an insecurity that at any moment a few mistakes or industry hiccups or something could result in us losing our jobs. And just think how encouraging it is for us to hear from our boss that we're doing a good job!

"Four out of five women acknowledged sometimes feeling insecure about their man's love and the relationship. Among women under forty-five, the percentage jumped to 91 percent, and among those with children middle school or younger, it was almost universal.

It is irrelevant whether she should know logically that she's loved. If she doesn't feel loved, it's the same for her as if she isn't loved."

Here are some triggers:

- Conflict
- Withdrawal – Often we can't fully articulate something yet or we want to avoid saying something hurtful.
- Silence – "If you're quiet, it must be me."
- Her emotional bank account is depleted.

Two ways to help your wife **feel** loved. Reassurance heals insecurity, pursuit prevents insecurity.

Regular Reassurance:

"Do you still love me???"

- During conflict, reassure her of your love – If you need to get space, reassure you of her love first. "I'm angry right now, and I need some space, but I want you to know: we're okay." 95% of women said that would diminish or eliminate their emotional turmoil. 86% said that would make them more likely to be able to give him space.
- If she's upset, realize that she doesn't need space – she needs a hug. Hug the porcupine???
- If she's being difficult, don't stop – keep reassuring her of your love. The more unloved she feels, the more likely she is to push her husband away or to make it hard for him to love her.

"Do you still love me???"

Pursuit:

Pursuit is action. It's what you did when you first wanted to make her yours. It fills up her emotional bank account.

For women, there is never a magic moment of closure when they feel permanently, fully, deeply loved.

How do you pursue your wife?

1. Time hanging out together.
2. Listening.
3. Flirting.
4. Notes, texts, emails, just to say Hi.
5. Shared dreams.
6. You proved that you were smitten.

But that was exhausting! I got married so I could stop doing that stuff!

Not the big things. Just lots of little things.

For Women: Your Love Is Not Enough!

When asked to choose between “to feel alone and unloved in the world” or “inadequate and disrespected by everyone”, 74% of men chose the first. And many couldn’t choose because they saw them both as one and the same. If he feels disrespected, he is going to feel unloved.

What are examples of respect? Trust, appreciation, admiration, belief, honor.

How do you know when you’ve crossed the disrespect line? There is an easy barometer: our men’s anger.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs – “In a relationship conflict, crying is often a woman’s response to feeling unloved, and anger is often a man’s response to feeling disrespected.”

In the middle of a conflict with my wife, I am more likely to be feeling: That my wife doesn’t respect (81%) / love (19%) me right now.

Just as you need the man in your life to love you unconditionally even when you’re not particularly lovable, your man needs you to demonstrate your respect for him regardless of whether he’s meeting your expectations at the moment.

What if you don’t respect him? It’s possible that it is because of the “Crazy Cycle.” You can stop that!

Or maybe it’s because of what you say about him. Feelings often follow words or actions. Your choice to show respect to your husband can change your feelings.

But it’s not just saying, “I respect you.” But he does need to hear, “I’m so proud of you,” “I trust you,” and “Thank you for what you did.”

- Respect his judgment – knowledge, opinions, decisions. Many men feel as if their opinions and decisions were actively valued in every area of their lives except at home. Their coworkers trust their judgment more than their own wives! Being ordered around. Treating him as if he is stupid.
- Respect his abilities – let him fix it
- Respect what he accomplishes – Girls wonder, “am I special?” “am I lovable?” Boys wonder, “Do I measure up?” “Am I any good at what I do?” Saying, “You did a great job at that meeting,” or “You’re such a great dad,” is much more emotionally powerful to a man than hearing, “I

love you.” And make sure there’s no hidden failure message or criticism.

- Respect in communication – disappointment, attacks
- Respect in public – “My wife says things about me in public that she considers teasing. I consider them torture.” The male ego is incredibly fragile. It’s not a matter of being prideful. It’s just feeling adequate. Honestly praise him. Ask his opinion in front of others.
- Respect in assumptions – assume the best. If my husband doesn’t help with the kids or the cleaning, I shouldn’t assume that he sees it and is choosing not to help. I should start with the assumption that he doesn’t see it.

How do you show your man respect?

1. Trust
2. Appreciation
3. Admiration
4. Belief
5. Honor

If a man’s wife is supportive and believes in him, he can conquer the world – or at least his little corner of it. He will do better at work, at home, everywhere. By contrast, very few men can do well at work or at home if their wives make them feel inadequate.

Background Passage:

God is so awesome that He gave us instruction exactly in line with how He wired us as men and women!

Ephesians 5:33 – Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband.

Nevertheless, also as for you, let each one in his manner be loving his own wife as himself, and the wife, let her be continually treating her husband with deference and reverential obedience.” – Wuest Expanded Translation

He never tells the wife to love her husband. And he never tells the husband to respect his wife (presumably because we already tend to give what we want to receive).

Conclusion

Lord willing, these will be our three areas of focus for 2016.