

WHAT YOUR HUSBAND REALLY WANTS

It's really amazing that men and women come from the same species. Men's needs seem worlds apart from our own. A man's greatest emotional need is for significance—to know that who he is and what he does really makes a difference. God created him as a doer (Gen. 1:26). That's why he's always proving himself.

God's solution for man's deep need was not to leave him alone but to create "a helper suitable for him" (Gen. 2:18). A woman's work as half of this team involves coming alongside her husband to help meet his need for significance. Here are four ways to do just that.

- (1) Be your husband's cheerleader.** Your husband needs to sense your approval of who he is and what he does. So voice your appreciation for what he does. I've heard women complain that their husbands go to the neighbor's to help out while neglecting tasks at home. I wonder if the neighbors are better at saying, "Wow—that's a great job!" or simply "Thanks." No husband ever told his wife she talks too much when she's telling him how wonderful he is. Most men want to make their wives happy, so it's important to avoid complaints and criticism (Prov. 21:19). Criticism is hard enough to take from those outside the family, but when it comes from you it strikes at the core of who your husband is and diminishes his feelings of competence. In contrast, your appreciation for what he does helps your husband feel your love.
- (2) Be his champion.** In a way you are your husband's mirror, reflecting powerful messages about who he is. That's why he needs your loving encouragement and your respect (Eph. 5:33). You know your husband's vulnerable areas. You also know his area of strength and his greatest potential. No one else is in a better position to spur him on "toward love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24-25).

Proverbs 14:1 says, "The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish tears hers down." The wise woman protects her husband's dreams and goals; a foolish wife sarcastically puts down his ideas or plans. The wise woman listens to her husband, instead of interrupting him. The wise woman champions her husband by protecting their intimacy instead of gossiping with others about his faults. She deals with issues in private, and doesn't compare her husband with other men. Instead, she focuses on his strengths and gifts.

Part of being your spouse's champion is coming to terms with the "S" word. For years I struggled with submission because I didn't understand it. One definition is "an attitude of love that desires to cooperate." That attitude leads to actions, of course. But it comes from the heart. If you love your husband and he loves you, it's not hard to submit. Real love doesn't desire to push and manipulate. The "S" word is mostly about grace, about considering another person's needs before your own.

- (3) Be his companion.** Your husband wants you to be his friend. One reason a guy gets married is to have a companion to share the activities that interest him. You can also be your husband's companion by sharing his dreams. A time will come when he will get discouraged and wonder if he should make some major life changes. He'll begin to dream, and he needs to know that you won't immediately start shooting him down. Some dreams stay dreams, others can become reality. Either way, join your husband in his journey.

You can also foster companionship by letting your husband know you need him and depend on him. I used to figure that if I could do something for myself, why bother Bob with it? When he'd come out to help carry in the groceries, I'd say, "Oh, I can do it." Eventually he stopped offering to help, and it dawned on me that I had taken away my husband's joy in serving me because I made him feel he wasn't needed.

- (4) Be his complement.** God created Eve as a "helper"—a complement for her husband. Part of a woman's job is helping her husband become the man God wants him to be, but that doesn't make you his own personal preacher. Even if you're sure you know what areas of his life need to change, it's the Holy Spirit's job to inspire those changes. God loves your husband even more than you do, and his motives are pure and loving, while your own motives can be selfish.

Being a compliment doesn't mean forcing our husbands to do what we want. It means we do our best to create an environment that lets our husbands hear what God wants for them. Then we encourage them as they take steps to follow God's leading. When something comes up that I feel needs to be addressed with Bob, I pray first. I often find that God is working on me instead—teaching me to change my expectations or my response to my husband. Other times God prompts me to talk about the issue with Bob. When I've been careful to be my husband's cheerleader, champion, companion and complement, it makes him more open when I do voice concern. That's one more benefit of understanding what a husband really wants from his wife.

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