

going deeper study guide

unstoppable :: R-E-S-P-E-C-T



"...and the wife must respect her husband"

Ephesians 5:33b

"Men would rather feel alone and unloved than inadequate and disrespected."

Shaunti Feldhahn -- For Women Only

In Life Groups, kids, youth and adults study God's Word together and discuss the issues and challenges of life.

Who Knew . . . ?

OK, confession time. I have a bit of a pride issue when it comes to trivial (i.e. useless) information. My head is full of the stuff. No, not important stuff that might make my life better or easier – important stuff. Y'know, like all the lyrics to the theme song from the Super Chicken cartoon from my childhood; How many issues of the Swamp Thing comic were drawn by Berni Wrightson (1-10); What was the name of the ship that sailed to Skull Island in King Kong (The Venture) -- Like I said, important stuff!!

In college I also had a thing for obscure music trivia. I knew my stuff. Even today, I love finding out interesting little tidbits of trivia to stash away (which I'm sure is crowding out something REALLY important). Well, I came across a cool little factoid while preparing this lesson. It has to do with the song R-E-S-P-E-C-T. When you hear that song mentioned, what do you think of? Probably, like me, you think of Aretha Franklin. It was her signature song. It became a song that came to be embraced by, and representative of, the feminist movement of the 70's. What I did not know, however, is that the song was written by...wait for it... **a man!** Yes, the song that put the Queen of Soul on the map and had feminists everywhere shouting along was written by Otis Redding. It was about how when he came home from being on the road, the only thing he really needed from his wife was her respect. Otis was like, "you can have all my money - all I'm asking is for a little respect" - He even called that "my profits". Cool huh?

Here's the thing. Otis is right. Though the Beatles sung "All You Need Is Love" – at the end of the day, love is not enough.

In writing this before actually hearing the sermon I can only assume that Matt has addressed the intense need men have to be respected. Since men aren't typically very much in tune with the depth of their own feelings, my guess is that there were light bulbs going off over the heads of a lot of men about this – and hopefully the same can be said for women.

Q :: Share a story of a time when you felt DIS-respected. What other feelings did that produce?

Q :: In what situations, or to whom, are we required to give or show respect?

Q :: The second half of Ephesians 5:33 is listed in the quotes above. The whole verse reads: "However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." I find it VERY interesting that in this passage men are not told to respect their wives – and women are not told to love their husbands. Why do you think that is?

Q :: When placed in the context of a family structure where there are children, it seems that men are supposed to model love and women respect. Given today's culture, why is it important for kids to see respect modeled from the wife?

Q :: A reason often heard for a wife not showing respect to her husband is that he hasn't earned it. Yet, the verse comes in the form of a command (...the wife must respect...) – and it is unconditional (note the absence of "unless he..." at the end of the sentence). We all implicitly understand that the love the man is commanded to give his wife is unconditional – she is to be loved in spite of her shortcomings, failures or times when she might be unlovable in her behavior. Why do we believe that love must be unconditional, but respect must be earned?

Now This Oughta Be Fun

Hear that sound? No? I may be wrong, but it sounds like a can of worms being opened up...

I love when Matt, or other pastors I listen to, break down a verse by giving the more literal translation of the original language. Sometimes they will also offer multiple translations of the same verse. Both approaches usually open up the window to let more light into the understanding of the verse in question. I'm a fan of the latter approach in my personal study. I like hearing how different translations might tackle a given verse or passage. I like hearing the paraphrase version found in The Message, but I'm particularly fond of The Amplified Bible. I think the main reason is that it's overly verbose (like me) and is usually filled with lots of extra (additional, added, optional, other and supplemental) adjectives (love those) to further bring out and enhance the meaning.

Well I did that for Ephesians 5:33.

I thought of how pastor Tony Evans points out that in Ephesians 5, Paul gives 3 verses of instruction for wives and 8 verses to husbands. Knowing that, I had to laugh when seeing the Amplified translation:

However, let each man of you [without exception] love his wife as [being in a sense] his very own self; and let the wife see that she respects and reverences her husband [that she notices him, regards him, honors him, prefers him, venerates, and esteems him; and that she defers to him, praises him, and loves and admires him exceedingly]. [1 Pet. 3:2.]

Now I know the women out there are thinking "well THAT was obviously translated by a *man*!"

Surprise! - it was translated by a woman: Mrs. Frances Siewert, and published in 1965 (a very good year, by the way)

Now if that "amplification" of what respect means wasn't enough, I noticed a reference to another verse (1 Peter 3:2) - interesting that it's part of the passage, and not a footnote. So I thought "let's do a little Bible Study and see what *that* verse has to say"...

When they observe the pure and modest way in which you conduct yourselves, together with your reverence [for your husband; you are to feel for him all that reverence includes: to respect, defer to, revere him--to honor, esteem, appreciate, prize, and, in the human sense, to adore him, that is, to admire, praise, be devoted to, deeply love, and enjoy your husband].

Tired yet ladies? -- C'mon, that IS funny, right?

What I find funny, is not the long, exhaustive list – but that a woman who conceived the idea of producing an edition of the New Testament which would employ "amplifications" to bring out the meaning of the Greek words, as she found them explained in various scholarly sources, or as translated in different Bible versions, would feel the need to amplify things THAT much!

I think it underscores how profound a mystery this need of men really can be for women.

I think this sums it up pretty well. In the book For Women Only, author Shaunti Feldhahn talks about a survey given to men, and one question in particular, that connected the dots for her in this respect issue. The specific question asked was: "Think about what these two negative experiences would be like: to feel alone and unloved in the world OR to feel inadequate and disrespected by everyone. If you were forced to choose one, which would you prefer?" She then writes:

When I originally tested the survey questions, I was perplexed that many men had a hard time answering the "unloved versus disrespected" question – because they appeared to equate the two. Chuck Cowan, the survey-design expert, warned me that might happen. *Why?* I wondered. *Those are two totally different things!* Then one of my readers tested my survey questions on ten men who didn't know me. When I got the surveys back, only one note was attached: "A lot of the guys fussed over Question 3 [the question above]. They did not feel the choices were different."

Finally, the lightbulb came on: *If a man feels disrespected, he is going to feel unloved.* And what that translates to is this: If you want to love your man the way *he* needs to be loved, then you need to ensure that he feels your respect most of all.

Well Now What?

OK, so for most men respect truly does EQUAL love - but wives just “feeling” respect for their husbands is not enough. Feldhahn puts it this way:

My own husband put it this way: “Deep down, I don’t really doubt that you respect me. I’m frustrated sometimes that you don’t know how to respect me, that you don’t know what is affirming to me as a man.”

Feeling respect for our husbands but not overtly showing it is the same as their feeling love for us but not showing it! It’s like that awful joke: “Why do I have to tell my wife I love her? I told her that when we got married!” Just as a wife would feel dreadful if her husband never demonstrated his love, a husband feels dreadful if a wife never demonstrates respect. It’s not a negotiable! However, the way a man needs to feel your respect is quite different from the way you need to feel his love.

So you see, we may now understand the need with greater clarity, but still be speaking a different language when it comes to expressing it. Respect is both a verb and a noun: an action and an attitude. Let’s try this...

- 1 :: Have all of the women write lists of things they think they can do to show respect to their man. Have all the men do the same.
- 2 :: Next have the women read their notes aloud and make a master list. Then have the men read theirs as well, again having a master list of their ideas. Compare, contrast and discuss the lists. What, as women, can be learned from how a man interprets respectful gestures? What, as men, can we learn about our wives intentions behind the gestures they see as showing respect?

Conclusion:

As a follow-up to the exercise above, there are many resources that unpack particulars of how women can show respect to their husbands in ways that are meaningful to them, as men. Here are just some random things that I came across in my own research that seemed too good not to share:

Here are three of the ways I began to respect: They spell out the goal -- to treat him like a V.I.P.
Respect him Verbally, Intellectually, and Physically.

Verbally

Cut out (ok...cut back) complaining and add in compliments.

If you want to have a peaceful, happy marriage, learn the art of the compliment.

Intellectually

Men like to solve problems and fix things. So appeal to his intelligence by asking him to help you solve a problem. Instead of saying “This garage is a mess, clean up your camping stuff!” Try, “I’d like your help with something. Could you figure out a storage system for all the camping supplies?” Don’t imply that he isn’t smart. Instead of saying “I think you are wrong about...” Say, “I’m confused about...please explain it again” (Remember to keep your tone of voice sarcasm-free.)

Physically

Physically -- ask what he would like you to do and then, do it. Find out what his top three needs are. Ron likes the laundry done, physical intimacy at least twice a week (guaranteed) and he likes me to keep my “girly-make-up stuff” off of the bathroom counter. If these top needs are met, he’s content and easy to get along with. I know it sounds simple, but each of us have different things that make us feel loved and appreciated. You won’t know what he wants unless you ask him.

Feldhahn says that her surveys revealed that when relating how they need respect demonstrated, men’s comments tended to fall into one of four key needs:

Need #1: Respect his judgement

The men were really touchy about this. A man deeply needs the woman in his life to respect his knowledge, opinions and decisions—What I would call his judgement. No one wanted a silent wallflower (nor would I advocate that!), but many men wished their mate wouldn't question their knowledge or argue with their decisions all the time.

Need #2: Respect his abilities

Another strong theme that emerged was that men want—even need—to figure things out for themselves. If they can, they feel they have conquered something and are affirmed as men. It turns out the old joke about men never wanting to stop and ask directions is based on this truth. If they can find their way through the hazards of the concrete jungle with only a tattered map and their wits, they feel like they've conquered something. They feel affirmed, excited, encouraged, alive.

Realizing that, now put yourself in your man's shoes and listen to this phrase: "Honey, can we *please* just stop and ask for directions?" He's out to conquer Everest, and you're telling him you don't believe he can do it.

Need #3: Respect in communication

Women hold an incredible power in the way we communicate with our men (both husbands and sons) to build them up or tear them down, to encourage or to exasperate. No matter what *we* are saying, in the end, what matters is what the guy is hearing. Obviously, some people can be overly sensitive, and we can't walk on eggshells all the time. Nor do we want to pass up opportunities to help them understand *our* communication wiring. That said, considering that most men appear to be highly sensitive to disrespect—including seeing disrespect where none is intended—I would argue that it is not the average man who needs to be less sensitive to a woman's words, but the average woman who needs to be less sensitive to her man's feelings.

Need #4: Respect in public

Now we come to one of the most important points in the book. There appears to be an epidemic of public disrespect for men, and the biggest culprit is not television, movies, or other media, but the women who are supposed to love their men most. Dozens of men told me how painful it is when their wives criticize them in public, put them down, or even question their judgement in front of others.

There is a goldmine of insights into the male species to be had in Feldhahn's book (material used here was just from chapter 2). There is a companion book co-written with her husband Jeff that is equally honest and insightful into how women tick, called *For Men Only*. Both are highly recommended to help understand how to love your spouse in ways that are meaningful and significant to them – not just in the ways that come more naturally to us.