

The Respect Challenge for Married Women

Most women have no problem with the idea of unconditional love, and they need it and expect it from their husbands. What so many wives have difficulty understanding is that their husbands desire and need to be respected in much the same way. These next 14 days, use these 14 “Respect Challenges,” starting tomorrow, as a way to grow into a more intimate union with your husband.

Challenge 1, Day 1 – Introspection: All of us are affected by our childhoods and the example of marriage and family that our parents set for us. Today, you will pray and ask for wisdom in understanding a key experience from your past that has impacted the way you currently walk through marriage with your spouse. When an incident comes to mind, use its memory to consider how it has affected the way you interact in your marriage.

Challenge 2, Day 2 – Self-Control: Many times, more strength is required to respond with self-control than to react. Respectful communication often means not becoming emotional and arguing. If you disagree with your husband, try asking a gentle question instead to clarify or point out what information he might be missing. For this entire day, don’t argue with your husband about anything he says, even if you think he is completely wrong. Remember, this is not an exercise in becoming a doormat, but rather an opportunity to discern how self-controlled you are. Pray for God’s help in this.

Challenge 3, Day 3 – Random Acts: True respect for your husband also means taking care of things that your spouse deems important to him. Today, while continuing to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger, do one act of kindness or a chore for your husband that you know is important to him. Actively choose to have a positive attitude and do this chore without expecting him to even notice, and without pointing out what you did for him. Pray that one of the ways God will reveal Himself to your spouse will be by enabling you to love without expectation. Be certain to thank God for any progress or positive changes you have experienced spiritually or relationally.

Challenge 4, Day 4 – Always Speak Kindly: Many of our words can tear down our spouse. Sometimes, we are not even aware of coming off as critical or disrespectful to our husbands. In an effort to communicate respect today, only speak words that will encourage your husband, and refrain from communicating with him or about him in a way that diminishes him.

Challenge 5, Day 5 – Remember: Is your husband expecting kindness from you or criticism? When is the last time you really saw your husband the way God sees him? Remember, Jesus died for him too. For today’s challenge, write down five positive attributes or strengths that were reasons enough for you to marry your husband in the first place, and why each were important to you at the time. Pray to God that He will help you see your husband as He sees him.

Challenge 6, Day 6 – Share: Why does God love your husband? Why do you love your husband? Lives and people can change, but the reasons for a sacramental union last a lifetime. For today’s challenge, tell your husband what you wrote down and why in the “Remember” challenge and then comment to him about how these strengths are still present in his character. Pray for God to show you these strengths and help you act on reinforcing them daily.

Challenge 7, Day 7 – Compassion: The Bible says “in your anger, do not sin,” but it does not say to never be angry. Recognize there is frequently a difference between the things we deem worthy of anger, and those that God does. Today, think of the compassion that Christ showed to those who were considered inferior as he healed the sick and ministered to the poor. Choose to actively extend grace to your husband. If he says something that hurts your feelings or forgets something of importance to you, resolve to not take something personally. Pray that God will help you with this.

Challenge 8, Day 8 – Honesty: References to the “nagging wife” or “quarrelsome woman” are repeated five times in the book of Proverbs. For this challenge, ask him, without arguing, justifying your behavior or being offended, to honestly tell you how you are doing in this area. Ask questions to clarify when necessary, and use this challenge as a way to open up lines of communication about how you both interact in this area. Pray that God helps you grow as you need to.

Challenge 9, Day 9 – Treat Him Like a Man: Christ gave us the ultimate gift by dying on the cross. Before that He repeatedly gave healing, teaching, and food to those in need without expectation of payment or appreciation. His behavior is the perfect example of love. It is God’s love for us, brought forth by Jesus. From this day forward, when you experience resentment or disappointment due to your husband’s reaction (or lack of reaction,) consider how your expectations make you feel. Choose in these moments to change your attitude to loving without expectation, as Christ did.

Challenge 10, Day 10 – Sweet Words: Write down five things your husband does every single week, as well as what each of those activities represent and why they are important to you. Using these items, write a total of five notes to your husband and hide them where he will find them over the course of a week. Have no expectation that your husband will notice or say even a single word about receiving these notes. You are doing this to build him up and encourage him. This is an opportunity to give him a gift without a single expectation.

Challenge 11, Day 11 – Unity: What would happen if you made it your mission to do everything possible to promote togetherness of heart with your husband? What if every threat to your unity was treated as an enemy to be eliminated by love, humility and selflessness? What would your marriage become if you were never again willing to see your oneness torn apart? For this challenge, isolate one area of division in your marriage and look on today as a fresh opportunity to pray about it. Ask the Lord to reveal anything in your own heart that is threatening oneness with your husband. Pray that God will do the same for him.

Challenge 12, Day 12 – Sacrificial Love: You may have come all this way and not received a single “Thank You,” or had him notice anything you’ve done thus far. Or maybe you have received gratitude or acknowledgement. Either way, recognize right now that your selflessness has not gone unseen. You are not alone if you love your husband sacrificially and he is unaware. Perhaps God allows this to occur so we can get a picture of what He did for us. For today’s challenge, reflect on the concept of sacrificial love, discussing it prayerfully in your spirit with God and writing down any enlightening thoughts he brings you. Pray for God’s help loving others the way Jesus loves us.

Challenge 13, Day 13 – Standing Strong: Perhaps you’ve been blessed with the opportunity to cling to your husband during a really difficult time. Perhaps you’ve been there when he’s most needed you. For today’s challenge, tell your husband that you want to go on the record as desiring to stand by him always. Tell him you would like to do whatever it takes to become the person he trusts the most and considers his most valued confidant. Tell him you consider it a privilege to pray for him and let him know you will be asking him for prayer requests on a daily basis. In prayer, ask God to help you achieve this.

Challenge 14, Day 14 – Personal Relationship: Many people crave an intimate relationship with God, but don’t know how to go about it. Asking Him to help in that area is a great place to start. For today’s challenge, take a leap outside of your comfort zone and ask God to create in you a soul which longs to experience His presence. Pray He awakens you in the morning to spend time with Him, and ask Him to help you carve out moments to be with Him.

Congratulations on completing The Respect Challenge! We hope these 14 days have given you the opportunity to grow closer to God and with each other. May God richly Bless your marriage!