

From woman to woman...

HOW TO CHANGE YOUR HUSBAND



Margaret Elliott

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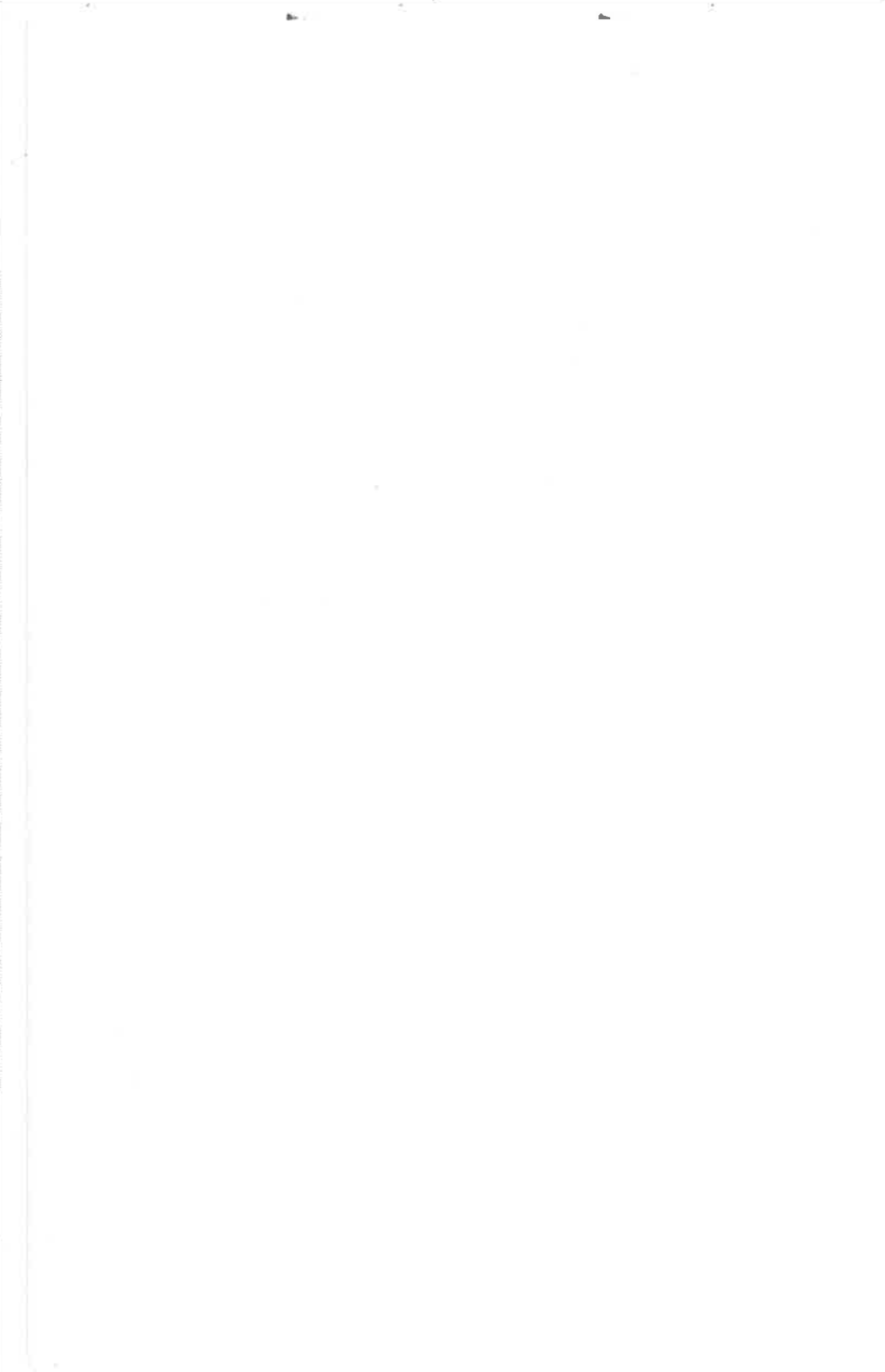
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PART I

"And they lived happily ever after" is the ending phrase (or the unspoken assumption) of romance novels, our modern day fairy tales. Some women put their hope in this dream world. Others, coming from a happy home background, automatically expect that their marriage will be just like Mom and Dad's. Then when the reality of life descends upon them some time after the wedding ceremony, they are mystified, hurt, bewildered and miserable. They feel defrauded.

"What's wrong?" they ask. "Where did my dream go? My husband isn't the Prince Charming I thought he was." Then begins the list of complaints: "He doesn't spend money right"; "He leaves his clothes lying around"; "He neglects me"; "He doesn't appreciate what I do"; and on and on.

Other women say, "I knew he had these faults but I figured I'd straighten him out after we got married. I thought that our love would cover up our differences. But I just can't do a thing with him!"

All of these women came to marriage with unrealistic expectations. Regular life goes on after the excitement of the ceremony wears off. No couple is ever transported into an unending paradise. Life is made up of differences, problems, and adjustments even though two young people in love may be blind to the fact. Differences, irritations, and problems don't magically disappear because now you are married to each other. On the contrary, they are likely to get bigger and to multiply.

Why is this so? An important factor is that both the man and the woman were born to a different set of parents. Each one grew up in a different family with different rules, goals, habits and values. Each person was molded by his family more than he realizes.

Bill and Mary grew up next door to each other, but Bill's family was large and easy going while Mary's was small and well-regulated.

Judy grew up in a family of generations of Christians, but Ray's family are unbelievers. He's the first one to become a Christian.

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John's family spent their money as it came in, while Chris' family lived on a strict budget with a savings plan.

Sue's mother kept an immaculately clean house, never allowing anything out of place, but George's family just lived all week and cleaned house on Saturday.

Bob grew up in the city, while Elizabeth grew up on a farm and had visited the city only a few times.

Harry and Rose met at a college far from their homes. Their friends and family are from different towns.

Jim loves to hunt and fish, but Lisa is a dainty, very feminine girl who is deathly afraid of a mouse.

Dave is an extrovert who makes friends easily and enjoys getting together with them. Laura is a homebody who would prefer a quiet evening in front of the fireplace.

Hopefully, in the process of friendship, courtship, and engagement the couple discovers a majority of the similarities and differences that they have. Supposedly they become engaged because they love each other for the similarities they have and in spite of the differences. Sometimes it is the differences which attract a couple to each other, because the differences of one complements the other's personality and life. The differences can make the other person exciting. Opposites attract. Different life styles, different ways of attaining goals, different temperaments and different outlooks on life are interesting and attractive. People marry because they have needs that the other can fulfill. If each is ready and willing to fulfill the others needs there will be happy harmony. But if they selfishly want only their own way and try to make the other person fit into a mold, misery and unhappiness are the outcome.

Unfortunately, many courting couples do not take the proper time to evaluate each other sufficiently. Some fall quickly into intimacies. Others, mistakenly thinking that physical attraction and congeniality are "love", quickly become engaged and marry. Neither type has taken sufficient time to get to know the "real" person they are marrying. They marry without heart-to-heart, mind-to-mind discussions of goals and values. They marry without seeing one another in a variety of situations. Their time together has been having "fun" together when each was on his best behavior. Then comes the time of high excitement of their

engagement with the planning and preparations for the wedding ceremony. The big day arrives and everything is wonderful.

The euphoria of being married may last a few hours, a few days, weeks or even months before reality sets in with the crash of dreams falling. Day-to-day life has dulled the excitement. Instead of continuing to delight in the differences, they have begun to criticize one another and try to make the other fit the mold each came from. Not only that, but now that they're married and living together they have discovered "bad" habits that they didn't know existed and the ones they knew about are worse than they thought! If they saw faults and things they did not like during their courtship but married anyway, they were forewarned. Perhaps they lacked proper pre-marital counseling or maybe they would not have listened anyway. Whatever the situation was, the fact is that now they are married. This may describe what you feel happened to you. "So what do I do now? How do I find the answer?" you ask.

On our kitchen wall we have a plaque which says, "Until a Christian prays about a thing, the *most important thing* a Christian can do is to pray." Philippians 4:6 says: "Be anxious in nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." Thank God for your husband. Thank God for your marriage. Thank God that He can and will help with your problems. Nothing is too unimportant to bring to God. There is no trouble too small or too large that He will not hear. He can give guidance, comfort and the strength to bear it. Pour out your heart to God. Tell Him all the problems you have with your husband.

As you ask for God's help make up your mind to submit to your husband. From the beginning of creation God made man and woman to be different in many ways. In recent times, those who proclaim and promote so-called woman's liberation have tried to say and to prove that these differences do not exist except in our imaginations and because of false cultural traditions. However, the more that psychology, biology, medicine and other sciences investigate the matter honestly, the more they are finding out that man and woman are different in a multitude of ways, even before birth.

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Long ago God, knowing these differences were there because He created them himself, set up the order of human married life. He set up the man as the head and the woman as the man's fit helper and companion. In the New Testament, God gives us a beautiful comparison between the relationship of husband and wife with the relationship of Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:22 says: "Wives submit to your own husbands as to the Lord." It does not say, "if he treats you the way you think he should," or "if he acts right." Verse 23 tells why you must submit: "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church."

Submit means to adapt your ways and your life to fit in with his ways and his life. Women are made to be able to submit and to be able to fit in, otherwise God would not have asked us to do it. This, of course, does not mean that you are to be a door mat or a slave. It does not mean that you are a second-class member of the marriage. It means that you are to willingly take your proper position assigned by God.

"But," you say, "I've heard that marriage is a partnership, that it should be 50/50 when a couple makes decisions." Although the world thinks that such an arrangement elevates a woman, it does not. It puts her in rebellion against God and her husband. Two cannot be in charge. One must be the follower of the other. God has said that the woman is to follow the man's leading. She must submit to his headship. Each must give 100% to fulfilling their position.

This does not mean that the husband is always right and the wife is wrong when there is a disagreement. It does mean that when there is disagreement that the final decision is the right and responsibility of the husband. The more completely the wife has the attitude of submission, the more the husband will listen and take into account the ideas, desires and opinions of his wife. The wife, of course, will have to go along with some decisions that she dislikes. But she can actually feel less pressure and have more peace by remembering that the responsibility for making decisions does not rest on her shoulders.

God has given man the ability to be more objective in his thinking. He can look at the facts and make a decision based on

the facts. However, a woman is more emotionally oriented, which often interferes with objective decision-making. For these reasons a man does not make a good mother and a woman does not make a good father. The man and the woman should supplement one another, each supplying what the other lacks. Together they are a team to work together and to rear a family.

Recognition of the God-given differences in man and woman must be made long before children are born to them. It should begin even before the wedding ceremony. It should be a part of their courtship as the couple learns about each other. The girl should be investigating and deciding bit by bit if she would be willing to submit her life to this man. The man should be looking to see if this girl could and would be able to fit into his life and his leadership. Engagement is the time of testing out these relationships of submission and leadership as a couple plans and prepares for marriage. If the differences become major conflicts, they had better wait to get married or perhaps even break off the engagement completely. Differences get bigger and wider after marriage. They do not magically disappear.

Love is the key to submission. As a Christian you have already experienced Jesus' love and have put yourself under His rule. He is your King and you have submitted your life to His authority. So, in the same way, with love and because of love, you can submit to your husband whom Christ has placed over you as your head. "But," you say, "Christ is perfect, and my husband is far from perfect. You just don't know what my husband is like!" Perhaps your husband does have a multitude of faults but **so do you**. You are not responsible for changing his faults, but you are responsible for changing your own faults. Someone has said that if you are trying to change your husband you are looking for a miracle. On the other hand, it is much easier to change yourself. It takes willingness, determination and prayer.

PART II

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Stop at the end of each phrase. Think how each thought can be applied to your relationship with

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your husband. What is each phrase saying to you about your own attitudes and actions toward your husband?

Consider these: (NKJ)

Love suffers long--"Because I love my husband I will be patient with his faults and not expect magic changes. I will not accuse him with phrases such as: 'you never' or 'every time' or 'you always'."

and is kind--"I will treat my husband with the love and kindness that I want him to treat me with."

love does not envy--"I will not be jealous of my husband's talents, abilities and position. I will thank God that He made me a woman."

love does not parade itself--"I will not brag about my accomplishments. I will not compare him to my father to make him feel put down."

is not puffed up--"I will not be proud and think my way is always right. I will not try to force my husband to be what I think he ought to be."

does not behave rudely--"I will treat him with respect both at home and especially in the presence of others. I will use 'please' and 'thank you'."

does not seek its own--"I will not be selfish, always wanting and never satisfied with what he provides. I will give my love freely to my husband by demonstrating my willingness to submit to his decisions even if they are different from what I think."

is not provoked--"I will not fly off the handle or become quickly angry and irritated over little things or even big things. I will calmly discuss disagreements with him. I will not worry."

thinks no evil--"I will not be suspicious of him nor will I wish for revenge for anything he does. I will emphasize his good qualities."

does not rejoice in iniquity--"I will not lie to get my own way or to cover up my mistakes. I will not cooperate with something truly evil, nor be happy to see my husband doing anything wrong to get money or power."

but rejoices in the truth--"I will enjoy an open relationship in conversation and actions with my husband. I will be honest in word and action toward him."

*bears all things--*I will put up with my husband's differences and leave the responsibility in his hands. I will not nag him about his faults. I will accept him as he is. I will be submissive at all times. I will adapt to his wishes."

*believes all things--*I will trust my husband. I will believe in him and his ability to head our home. I will try to understand his decisions."

hopes all things--"I will hope for the best for my husband personally, even in difficult times. I will maintain a cheerful attitude."

endures all things--"I will submit and remain faithful no matter what happens."

Love never fails--"Love succeeds. God does not withdraw His love but loves us no matter what we do. I have promised my husband before God 'to cleave to him, to love him, to comfort him, to honor him, to keep him and to obey him...for better or for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part' and I will keep those vows."

Decide today to accept your husband as the person that he is. Don't you realize that probably the very things that you want to change may be the characteristics that attracted you to him in the first place? Now you must accept the fact that there are some things only God and His Holy Spirit can change. There are some things that will change only with time. There are many things in the personality of your husband that will never change.

Accept him if he is a man who double checks on everything. Accept him if he is one who does not plan ahead, or if he is a man who is a dreamer. Accept him if he is a spender or if he is a saver. Accept him for the way he is, however he may be, and accept the fact that you cannot force him to change. If you will make up your mind to accept him as he is and love him as he is, you are on the road to more happiness. Your change of attitude can create an atmosphere for the possibility of changes on his part.

"I know all that, but can't you give me some ideas on how to change my husband's bad habits? They're really irritating. I can't do a thing with him. I keep telling him but he won't listen."

You have forgotten that God made your husband to be your head. You are to respect him as your head, not look down on him as a child. Children have to be told repeatedly what to do and how to do it. But not your husband. If you do, you are nagging him. Your nagging is condemned by God. "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman" (Proverbs 21:19). *Contentious* means quarrelsome, arguing, stirring up discord and strife. Romans 13:12-14 includes strife in a list of sins. You are causing your husband to want to run away and live somewhere else. He wishes he could find a nice quiet wilderness.

"But," you reply, "I don't see anything wrong with telling him something if it's right. After all it's for his own good."

The problem is that you are trying to force him to change. Most of the things you tell him, he already knows. You have told him many times. He may even agree in his mind that you are right, but he is turned off. He is so offended by your attitude and tongue that he refuses to listen. He refuses in order to prove that he is the one in charge. He does not need a mother anymore. He needs a wife. He knows God was right when He said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make a helper comparable to him." (Genesis 2:18) He wants and needs your companionship, your support, your help and your love. He does not welcome your advice unless he asks for it. He wants to be treated like a man, not like a little boy.

Your nagging actually discourages him from talking things over with you. In his heart he would rather run away than to have to listen to your constant reminders. Nagging him has not been successful in changing him, has it? Then why not get rid of your critical attitude and your nagging? Stop trying to force him to change. Instead, change your own attitudes and tongue!

Start concentrating on how to make him happy. Study his desires and interests. Start seeing how much you can do to wholeheartedly please him. Tell him daily, "I love you." Sincerely compliment and encourage him. Perhaps, because you are feeling

unhappy about your husband, you have been doing only what you have to for him with a martyr spirit. If you think it is too hard to try to please him in every way you can, remember that Romans 15:2,3 says: "Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good unto edifying. For Christ also pleased not himself." You may be surprised at the results. (ASV)

You can change your attitudes because God will help you, if you really want to change. Maybe this is a shock to you, but it has been proven over and over again that people react to the attitudes of others. Good attitudes beget cooperation. Kindness begets kindness. Love and consideration beget love and consideration. A smile multiplies smiles. Submission from a heart of love begets happiness. When one spouse develops better attitudes, this helps the other spouse to be willing to change too.

Following is my adaptation of a famous saying. Make it your desire and prayer:

"Lord, give me the serenity
to accept the things
I cannot change (my husband);
The courage to change
the things I can (myself),
And the wisdom
to know the difference."

Watch your husband's reaction. Trust God for the consequences of your full submission. He does not command unreasonably. He has not ever asked us to do anything that is impossible. He is there to help and guide. He knows all things and can accomplish His will. What better hands could we be in?

The keys are: pray, accept, love, submit, change yourself and trust God.

PART III

Below are some specific complaints I have heard from women about their husbands. Following each complaint practical suggestions are offered for changing your attitudes and actions to help handle the problem. Try these suggestions for awhile. If,

however, you need personal counseling, go to a Christian couple who have been happily married for a number of years. Choose carefully whom you ask to help. You may want to talk woman to woman first, but be sure that the woman you talk to has a husband that your husband will respect in case there is a need for man-to-man talks.

Some of you reading this have husbands who make no claims to being Christians. It is possible that when you attempt to make changes in your own life according to God's teaching that he will be sarcastic or ridicule you or make fun of you. These suggestions are not magic formulas that will wave a wand over his head so that, "Presto!" he will change. He may not change at all, but you must stick to doing what is right before God. God understands what you are suffering. He can comfort you and provide you with the strength you need. Do not give up praying. I have heard of husbands being converted as much as 20 years after their wives' conversion, largely because their wives never gave up following God and praying. 1 Peter 3:1 says, "Likewise you wives, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives."

"He spends too much time with his mother."

Accept your mother-in-law as she is.

Love your mother-in-law. Your husband is in part a product of the upbringing of his mother.

When you married, you took your in-laws as a part of your family.

Get rid of the jealousy in your mind and heart.

Change your attitude. Perhaps your husband goes to his mother in order to escape from your complaints, your lack of affection or a messy house.

Discuss the situation calmly with your husband so that the two of you can understand the thinking of the other.

Go with him to visit her and help her with something.

If she is acting like an enemy, treat her with love like the Bible teaches.

Instead of getting angry and yelling, be ready for his return with a clean house. Dress yourself attractively and greet him with a smile.

Pray to God about the situation.

"He's away from home too much."

Are you making your home a place where he wants to be? A man doesn't like a messy house nor a museum. He wants a comfortable home in which to live.

Neither can a man put up with a woman who has a nagging, argumentative spirit. Read Proverbs 17:1 and 25:24.

When he is home, do you set aside household tasks to be with him? There's no end to housework. Most of it will keep until later without causing a disaster.

Pay more attention to him and less to the children. Make him feel important and needed.

If it is possible, go with him whenever you can.

Thank God, he is working and not out drinking. Thank God he is out teaching the gospel and not running around. If he is out doing things he should not be doing, all you can do is pray for him.

Get rid of your martyr spirit and make sacrifices willingly.

If he's a workaholic, attract him away from his work by your sweetness.

Recall what attracted him to you and do your part to recapture romance.

Tell him how lonely you are when he's gone and how much you need him, but don't be a cry-baby.

Don't try to get even with him for his neglect by withholding your affection when he does come home.

Pray for him and accept him as he is.

"He's seldom home for meals."

Arrange meal times around his work schedule.

Always get up in time to prepare breakfast for him and to be at the table with him even if you can't eat that early yourself. In many homes, this is the only time a husband and wife can be alone together because at other times the children are around.

Have meals ready on time so he won't be rushed or late for an appointment.

Feed and put the kids to bed early one night a week so the two of you can have a late supper together. Fix the table up attractively and eat by candlelight.

Don't come to the table at any time looking like a rag doll off the trash heap.

Don't make a habit of fixing foods he doesn't like, even if they are nourishing.

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Make it your personal rule to not bring up unpleasant topics at meal time. But if he does, don't be upset but rather be glad he wants to open up and discuss what's on his mind with you.

Pray about it. Accept your husband. Trust God for the consequences.

"He's always late."

This may be a pattern of life that he learned as a child in his family.

Make it easy for him to be on time. Have meals ready, his clothes laid out, you and the children ready to walk out when he is ready. Avoid bringing up problems at the time he needs to prepare himself for leaving.

He doesn't come when called to meals? Give a 5 or 10 minute warning so he can finish or find a stopping place in whatever he is doing.

Plan meals for a little later than the set hour. Prepare meals that will keep.

Don't nag. Be glad to see him even when he is late.

Thank him when he is on time or when he calls to say he will be late.

"He won't help me with the housework."

Who is the housekeeper according to Titus 2:5?

Do you have too many outside interests that cause you to need help?

Are you reasonable in your requests for help? Moving heavy furniture is a man's job but washing the dishes (unless he offers) is not.

Are you acting like a "Martha" and making physical things too important?

How do you ask for help? Sweet words at an appropriate time can work wonders.

What do you help him with?

Maybe you can trade-off in a light spirit of fun. "Honey, if you could help me for a bit to finish this job, I'd have time this evening to help you with those things you asked me to do with you."

Accept your position as a Christian woman. Ask God to help you. Submit to your husband's ways and trust God for the outcome.

"He won't fix things that break."

How did you ask him to fix it? Did you pounce on him when he first came home from work?

Is it really something vital? Ask him if you should call a repair man.

Learn to fix small things yourself.

Instead of nagging him, suggest that you make a "panic" list for him of what needs fixing. He can look at it when he has time.

Remember that the choice is his as to when and if he wants to fix them.

If he's handy at fixing, buy him some tools for his birthday.

Accept the fact that some men are not handy at fixing things.

Assemble the things needed for the repair and put them with a funny and/or loving note in a place where he will see them.

When he is fixing something, stay out of the way and by all means do not try to tell him how to do it. If he needs your help and advice, he will ask for it. Above all, don't forget to show your appreciation with a loving "thank you" and a kiss.

"He sleeps too late on his day off."

Recognize that not all people have the same sleep cycle. If his is late and yours is early, this could be the reason for the conflict.

Work out a compromise on rising and retiring hours to fit you both.

Are you jealous because you can't sleep late too?

Try to understand his need for this sleep. You may get your extra sleep by going back to bed when he leaves for work or by taking a nap during the day.

Use the time for something special for yourself. Turn your angry energy into usefulness.

Talk it over with him. Plan ahead what "we are going to do on your day off". If he says, "sleep", accept it gracefully. Explain how it makes you feel in a calm, loving way.

Accept him and love him.

"He doesn't spend time with the kids."

Remember that it's normal for the father, since he's home less, to spend less time with the kids than the mother.

From before the baby's birth make your husband feel that he is an important part of each child. Don't neglect him as a husband and expect him to be just a father. If you push him out of your life because of the kids, he will resent them and

- consciously or subconsciously reject them. It's up to you to maintain a proper balance.
- Plan with him about things the family can do together.
- Arrange as many meals as possible at times when he can eat with the kids. Encourage conversation with the kids by the topics you bring up.
- Don't answer all the kids' questions yourself. Tell them, "Ask your dad." Give their father some of the privilege.
- When he is home, have the kids ask their father for permission to do things. If it's a big decision, it should be postponed until he is home.
- Plan little surprises with the kids that they can do for their father. Make greeting dad when he comes home, and telling dad "Good morning," "Good night," and "Goodbye" important moments in the kids' lives. Teach them to say, "I love you, Dad," and "Thank you, Dad."
- Regardless of the problems in the family, build up the children's respect for their father. Don't let the children see your dissatisfaction with his neglect through your attitudes, words, or actions.
- Be sure you are not neglecting the kids in the same way. Be available for little and big things. Always be ready to listen.
- Share cute or clever sayings of the little ones with him when they are not present. Be sure he always sees report cards, test papers, drawings, and other accomplishments and failures.
- Encourage the kids to do as much of this sharing as possible.
- Ask his advice and help with specific problems with the kids.
- Talk with him concerning your feelings about what you see as his neglect of the kids. Be calm and full of love.
- Accept the fact that you may not be able to do anything about this problem.
- Pray for him and the kids.

PART IV

"He doesn't pay our bills on time."

It is the responsibility of your husband, as the head of the family, to take care of paying the bills. If he doesn't, the blame falls on his shoulders.

It is not your responsibility to take the money in your hands in order to be in charge of it. If the bills are not paid, no blame falls on you.

It doesn't help your husband to feel like a man and the head of the family if you take over. Such action greatly harms his self-image and makes him feel like a failure.

There is no value in yelling at him or scolding him. It does help to pray and leave the matter with God and your husband.

With calmness and love say to him, "Forgive me for my sin in trying to take over our money matters. I am going to place myself in subjection to you in this matter, for that is what God wants. If you give me the money and ask me to pay some bill, I will gladly do it. But beginning today I am returning the responsibility of our money to you with all my love."

Also, be more careful how you are spending money that he is giving you for the house. Maybe he is having trouble paying the bills on time because you are spending more than he can afford.

Pray for strength to submit to your husband by letting him take care of the bills his way.

"He doesn't save money in the bank for the future."

Why do you want to save money in the bank?

Have you made a study of what the Bible says about money and what attitude a Christian needs to have toward it?

What does the Bible say about storing up treasures on earth?

Remember that your husband is not your father. He is going to make different decisions and have different goals from your father.

Discuss calmly with your husband about the matter of money and what goals the two of you have in how money should be spent. But be ready to calmly accept his decision with love.

If he won't discuss the subject or if he has no goals, accept that too.

Remember that your husband bears his own responsibility for how he spends and saves money. Your responsibility is how you spend or save the money he places in your hands to use for the family.

Who is the head of the family, according to the Bible?

Stop complaining. Accept your husband as he is. Pray and have faith in God.

"He saves too much money."

What is your husband's goal for saving money?

Discuss calmly with your husband about his goal and the needs of the family.

Why do you want more money to spend? Do you have a different goal in mind from your husband?

Even if you want to share with the needy and he doesn't, you must submit. Do you do what you can with the money you have to use at your discretion? Do things in place of giving money, such as:

cook a dish and take it to a home where there is illness or death;

mend clothes for an overworked young mother;

give away the clothes your family has outgrown;

invite a lonely person or a poor family over for a meal.

Are you spending money carefully, trying to help him balance the budget?

Stop complaining.

Accept the situation with love and submit to your husband's leadership.

Pray to God for help and give thanks for your husband.

"He doesn't know how to spend money correctly."

Is that just your opinion or is it the truth? On what basis are you judging your husband? Remember that your husband is not your father and will therefore do things in a different way. Neither is it fair to judge him by what other men in the neighborhood or the church leadership may do.

Stop nagging him about the matter.

Calmly discuss with him about the needs of the family. If (and be sure you really are) you and the kids are suffering because of his mismanagement:

you may just have to accept it;

it's surprising what you can do without;

learn ways to cut corners--

serve cheap but filling meals;

mend and remake clothes;

use out-patient clinics;

ask advice of church leaders;

thank God for what you do have.

If he asks for suggestions, give him some gently; if not, keep quiet.

Love him enough to offer your support instead of advice or ridicule when he makes a foolish decision or something doesn't work out the way he planned.

Remember that how your husband spends money is not your responsibility.

Make up your mind to have the right attitude. Ask God to help both of you.

"He won't let me work outside our home."

Why do you want to work outside your home? Is it in order to have more material things? Are you listening to women with worldly ideas or to the Bible?

According to the Bible, your husband is right. Read and study Titus 2:4,5 and obey the commands of God.

Notice that 1 Timothy 5:9,10 does not include "supplemented the family income" in the list of the good things a widow has done.

The wife who works outside the home takes away from her husband some of his feeling of being a man, and robs him of the satisfaction of being the provider for his family.

Have you considered the damage that will be done to your children if you are not at home with them?

Why are you not working more in the church if you have time on your hands?

If you are an older woman in the faith, have you considered your example and the command in Titus 2:3 to admonish the younger women? If you are working at a secular job you have little or no time to fulfill this vital place in the church. Younger women who need your counsel will feel they are imposing on your time.

Submit to your husband and to God. Pray about it.

"He insists that I work outside of our home."

Why is your husband sending you out to work? Are you asking for things other than real essentials? Are you making him feel inadequate because he is not able to buy the extras you ask for on his salary?

Are you using the house money carefully? Do you know how to buy food and clothing economically? Seek sound advice on how to do your job better.

Have you discussed this matter with him, calmly giving your point of view from Titus 2:4,5? More and more evidence is piling up to indicate that there is no substitute for the mother to take

care of her own children. Bringing up children is a full-time job that requires love, understanding, and commitment that only a mother is capable of giving. Not only that, but you also are the only woman who can fulfill your husband's needs. If you work outside the home, the time and energy you have for carrying out your responsibilities to your husband are greatly limited and your marriage very likely will suffer. God commands women to be "keepers at home," making it a married woman's priority.

There are women's organizations, some with no church affiliation, set up for the purpose of encouraging women who wish to stay home to take care of their families. Two of them are:

Home by Choice
Box 103
Vienna, VA 22183

Mothers at Home
P. O. Box 2208
Merrifield, VA 22116

If he insists, find out about and suggest ways you could supplement the family income by working at home. Perhaps these sources would have helpful ideas:

Try your local bookstore for:

555 Ways to Earn Extra Money
by Jay Conrad Levinson

Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Publishers 1982

Send for the booklet:

Working at Home: Ways to Supplement Family Income
Focus on the Family
Box 500
Pomona, CA 91769

Send a self-addressed envelope to:

New Ways to Work
149 Ninth Street
San Francisco, CA 94103

Send a self-addressed envelope to:

Association for Part-Time Professionals
7655 Old Springhouse Road
McLean, VA 22102

Send \$2.00 and a self-addressed envelope to:

Mother's Home Business Network
P. O. Box 423
East Meadow, NY 11554

Go to your local library for other information.

You and your husband together should count the cost of your working outside the home. Many couples have found that the price they have to pay in clothes for the working woman, cost of child care, the wear and tear on their nerves, the fatigue, and the stress on their marriage, is not worth the salary and the prestige gained by the mother working at an outside job.

Have you shown your willingness to sacrifice material things in order to stay home?

If there are problems of debt and how to spend money, have you suggested that the two of you get some counseling on the subject?

Pray that both you and your husband will have wisdom.

PART V

"He never puts anything away nor does he turn out the lights."

Accept him as he is. That's probably the way he was brought up.

Nagging only makes matters worse. Keep your mouth shut.

Don't treat him like one of the children.

Humble yourself and serve. Jesus did. You can put his things away and turn out the lights when he is gone.

Ask God to give you a willing spirit of service.

If he's not complaining about the electric bill, why should you?

It's his responsibility to provide for paying the bills.

Don't complain about his faults to the children. It destroys their respect for their father. If they complain about him, tell them that they have no right to criticize their father.

"He is moody, grouchy, stubborn, unfriendly and discourteous."

Are you driving him to be that way by your demands?

Is he reacting that way because of your nagging?

Don't react by getting into the same bad mood that he is in.

Look for special ways to please him.

Show real joy when he comes. Smile, open your arms wide to embrace him and express in words your delight that he is home again.

Learn when not to talk.

Love begets love; courtesy begets courtesy; friendliness begets friendliness; pleasantness begets pleasantness.

Don't expect your husband to fulfill all your needs for friendship. Women by nature need other women. Share good woman-talk (not gossip) and activities with other women.

Try to observe and understand what is making him that way right now. Maybe he is under a lot of pressures that he hasn't told you about. Encourage him to talk about what is troubling him. Listen, but don't judge.

Pray earnestly for him in this problem. For that matter, pray for your husband every day.

"He continually defers to my opinions because he thinks I'm more qualified than he is to make decisions."

This can be a real problem, especially when the wife has more education than her husband.

He may have had a mother who made all his decisions for him.

Be careful that you are not making him a lazy thinker by your attitude.

Instead of being independent and self-assured, ask for his help or opinion.

Build up your husband's ego. Be lavish with sincere compliments when he does make right decisions or when he does things on his own.

"I know you can do it," "I need you," "I'm depending on you," are words that he needs to hear often from you.

Let him make mistakes. You and the kids may suffer sometimes, but it is a sacrifice you have to make for his good and also for your own.

Stop reminding him about every little thing. Treat him as an adult who bears responsibility for his own actions, but don't tell him so.

Say frankly but with love, "Honey, I'm not going to express my opinion until after you tell me what you think. I need to know what you think." When it's your turn to express your opinion, keep it low-key with lots of "maybe"s and "perhaps"s.

In the end, leave the decision in his hands. Don't fret or complain or accuse if you think it's the wrong one. Keep quiet and go along with it.

Pray for your husband and for yourself.

"He won't take a bath or change his clothes when he should."

Understand his background. Maybe his mother nagged him to death on the subject.

Have the bath tub ready and available whenever he wants it, but don't remind him.

Compliment him when he is clean and smells good.

Buy soap, deodorant, and towels that appeal to his masculinity.

Don't try to make the bathroom too frilly.

Maybe he thinks he's helping you by wearing his clothes longer.

Explain that you don't mind the extra washing.

Never treat him as one of the children. Telling him to take a bath is not your job.

How about yourself? Are you keeping your appearance up and your body clean?

"He talks too much."

Learn to be a good listener. Maybe you're jealous because you want to dominate the conversation.

Take his talkativeness as a compliment to yourself. He wants to tell you everything. You're his friend.

A man needs a place and a person he can trust so he can feel safe to blow off steam.

Laugh at his jokes (even if you've heard them ten times before) with love.

Build up his confidence. He may feel inadequate and is trying to prove his importance. Ask intelligent questions.

If he talks too much in public, refrain from critical comments and looks.

Accept him as he is. Pray for him.

"He doesn't talk enough."

Do you give him a chance? It's a common fault of women to talk too much.

Maybe you can't be trusted to keep his comments confidential.

Remember he is a man. Men, in general, have a harder time expressing themselves than women. Some men are quieter than others. Know his interests and draw him out with good questions at appropriate times.

Don't depend upon him for your only companionship. Make friends with other women to have good conversation.

Don't "attack" him with a hundred questions or complaints when he comes home from work. He needs time to relax and adjust after a hard day at work. Greet him with love and a smile.

Let him know how important it is to you to know what he is thinking.

Accept him as he is. Pray for him.

"He's not growing spiritually or helping the family with family devotions."

Do you have your own personal Bible reading and prayer? Your quiet example speaks volumes.

Do you read and pray with the children? Or are you using your husband's failure as an excuse for your own failure? Do it when he's not around, so he doesn't feel threatened.

A self-righteous attitude is wrong. It will turn him off even more.

Ask his help with a scripture you don't understand.

Pray for him and keep quiet like 1 Peter 3:1 says.

PART VI

"He doesn't kiss me very often or tell me, 'I love you.'"

When was the last time that you said to him, "I love you"?

Don't ask him, "Do you love me?" It makes matters worse.

Are you treating him like one of the children?

Are you always too busy with the housekeeping and with the children to have time for him?

Are you putting pressure on him to buy more things for the house, for yourself, and for the children than he is able to provide?

When was the last time that you expressed appreciation to him for what he does for you and the children?

When was the last time that you prepared something special for him, like his favorite food?

Do you have bad breath?

Are you bathing and dressing yourself to be attractive to him?

Are you in subjection to him, or are you constantly complaining and trying to take over the leadership?

Count the reasons why you love your husband. Kiss him and say, "I love you," at least once a day. Do all you can to please him.

Pray.

"He always has his mind on sex."

Perhaps you do not understand that God has made man to have and to express his sexual desires more strongly than a woman. A man is also made to be more aggressive in sexual matters than a woman. Did you know that a man is excited sexually more easily and more rapidly than a woman?

Did you realize that a woman is made by God to be more romantic and needs more time to be excited sexually than a man? A woman responds emotionally first and then physically.

Are you trying to meet the sexual needs of your husband, or are you denying him? Study 1 Corinthians 7:1-5. Your body is not your own but belongs to your husband.

Which is better? Your husband expressing his sexual thoughts and desires to you or expressing them to some other woman?

Remember that it is a privilege to fulfill the needs of your man.

Study your husband and look for ways to please him with a joyful attitude.

"He never takes me out."

Watch the word "never". It's loaded and puts your husband on the defensive.

Don't expect to go out too much. Realize that a man is tired after being out working all day. Be willing to compromise in your desires.

Show appreciation when he does take you out.

Don't go around the house like a martyr because he didn't take you out this particular time.

At the appropriate time recall some of the good times you had during your courtship days. "Let's do it again like that time we....."

Look for things that he would be interested in doing, not just what interests you.

Make a list of possible things to do and present it to him when he's in a good mood. Plan together ahead of time so that both know what to expect. If he doesn't like to plan, accept him as he is.

Save up from your household expense money and surprise him with the money "to take us out". Better yet maybe "take him out" to something he wanted to do very much but didn't feel he could afford.

Pray to God. Submit with a loving spirit.

"He doesn't appreciate what I do."

Let's face it. Men in general, it seems by nature, do not notice the work their wives have done around the house. However, most men are irritated by a messy house. They have no idea how much work is involved in keeping house and caring for kids. So we have to accept them the way they are.

Do you show appreciation to him for what he does for the family?
Appreciation begets appreciation.

Just the fact that he is not complaining about what you do or don't do can be considered a compliment to your doing a good job.

Don't complain about his lack of appreciation. Don't act like a martyr.

Stop a minute and ask yourself, "Do physical things mean too much to me?"

God rewards in secret. Talk to Him about it.

"He doesn't understand me."

Do you communicate with him in a proper manner and at the right time?

Do your best in a loving way to keep the lines of communication open. Listen to him and lovingly say, "Please let me tell you how I feel about it."

Talk things over before a mountain forms. If he cannot or will not talk things over, you must accept him as he is with love. This may be the cross you have to bear, the sacrifice you must make.

Recognize that this is a common failing of men and that you are not alone.

Do your best to understand your husband.

Read a book on how to communicate with your spouse. Ask your husband to read it with you.

Perhaps you need the companionship of other women. Try to spend time in person or by phone with other women to talk over the things of life but not to gossip. Too often women try to use their husbands as their only source of companionship. Women need other women.

Never forget to talk to God about your problems.

PART VII--Conclusion

Regardless of how many complaints you may have against your husband, here are two good lists to make:

Make a list on paper of your husband's **good points**. Concentrate on these and thank God for them.

Make a list on paper of things you want to change about **yourself**. Start today to make these changes.

Add this pledge to your second list:

"As a Christian wife, with God's help, I have made up my mind:
to be humble instead of proud;
to demonstrate love rather than selfishness;
to overcome evil with good instead of with revenge;
to be submissive rather than bossy and motherly;
to be obedient instead of rebellious;
to be serene rather than irritable;
to have a meek and quiet spirit instead of a nagging tongue;
to pray rather than to fret; and,
to do all with the faith that God will help me."

Leave your shack of pride and rebellion. Cross the street. With the key of love, unlock the door of submission. Enter your mansion of a happy marriage.

Margaret Elliott

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