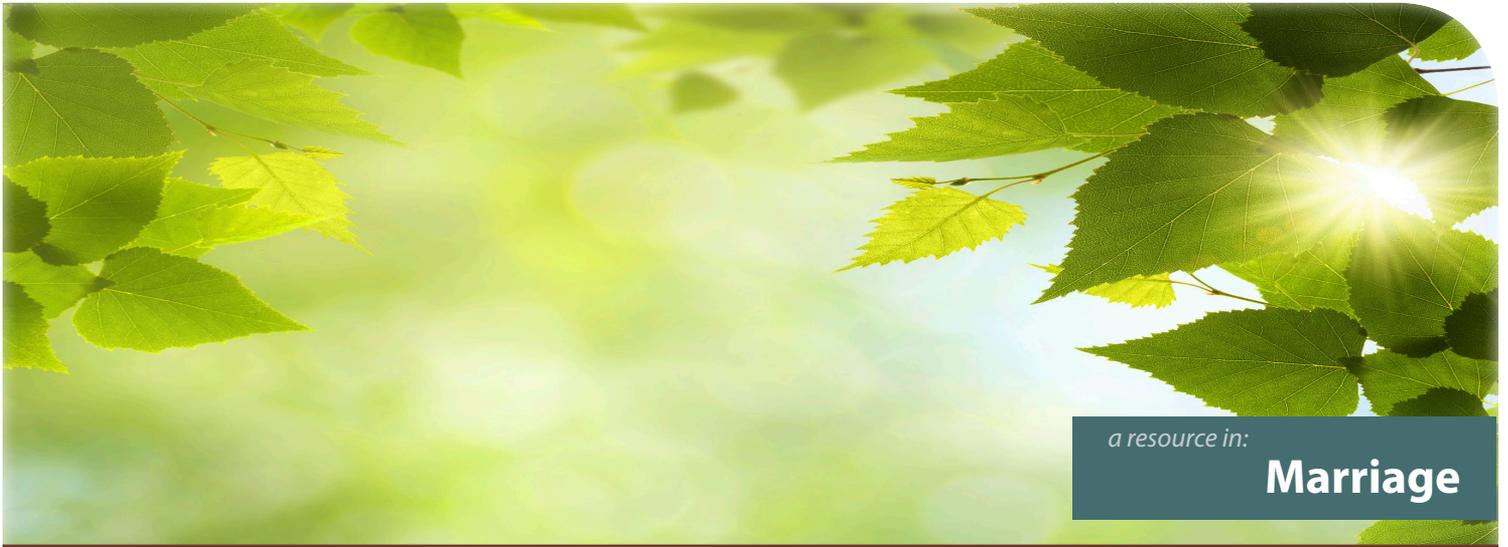


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## Affection, Love Languages & Gender Differences in Marriage



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# Affection, Love Languages & Gender Differences in Marriage

**Directions:** Read through the verses and information below allowing adequate time for discussion about each topic. The material below should not be considered exhaustive; rather, it should serve as a beginning point for you to search the Scripture and to learn more about marriage.

## I. SCRIPTURAL DIRECTION AND BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES.

### A. God designed and created two genders.

God created the male and female genders before sin entered into the world. Both males and females are created in the image of God, according to His design.

*Genesis 1:27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."*

### B. God intends for us to be loving.

The command to love one another is repeated throughout Scripture. Expressing love to your spouse is one way to show your love to God.

*John 13:35, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."*

*1 John 4:7, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."*

*Romans 12:10, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another."*

### C. We must work at developing our love for one another.

As part of our growth in Christ, we have the privilege and duty to increase our love for one another. Adding charity (i.e., Christ-like, self-sacrificing love) to brotherly kindness (i.e., friendship love) is part of this process.

*2 Peter 1:4-7, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."*

*Colossians 3:19, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them."*

*Titus 2:4, "That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands..."*

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## D. Compassion and tenderness.

Being compassionate and tenderhearted is very important in relationships, particularly within the context of marriage.

*Ephesians 4:32, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."*

*1 Peter 3:8, "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."*

## E. Be willing to learn about gender differences.

Take the opportunity to learn from each other. Your spouse is the best person to teach you about gender differences. Regardless of what you may see in anyone else's marriage, you have to learn to adjust to your spouse.

*Proverbs 1:5, "A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels."*

*Proverbs 24:3, "Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established."*

## F. Affection and gratitude are inter-related.

Affection often stems from a true sense of gratitude. Cultivating gratitude for your spouse will lead to more honest expressions of affection.

*Colossians 3:15, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful."*

*Hebrews 13:15-16, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."*

## II. PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

### A. Affection.

Affection can be defined as tender feelings of love that are expressed to another person. Notice that there are two parts to the definition: (1) tender feelings of love and (2) expressing those feelings to another person. Showing affection is a necessary way to honor and nurture one another. It helps keep love flourishing in your relationship. Affection in marriage needs to be deliberately maintained. Just as you work to improve your relationship with the Lord on a daily basis, you need to work to improve your relationship with your spouse on a daily basis.

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Learning how to give and receive affection in your marriage may be very easy at some times and difficult at other times. Accept that marriage is a learning process and learn from each other. You will need to teach your spouse about what things are most meaningful to you. You should not expect your spouse to “read your mind” or believe that he or she should “just know.” The belief, “If my spouse really loved me, he/she would just know to . . .” is unfair and incorrect. Expecting your spouse to think and feel the same way as you do is a common myth people hold about marriage. Express your thoughts, feelings, and expectations about affection clearly.

Affection, in its various forms, can be expressed daily, weekly, monthly, and/or sporadically. Don't let busyness lead you to overlook the importance of regular affection in your marriage. Discover ways to express affection to your spouse every day. For example, connecting with a kiss when leaving for work or coming home from work is a simple, daily expression of affection. Sometimes expressions of affection may take some planning and preparation. You may need to make a conscious effort to focus on your spouse and plan ways to show affection.

Some people are very comfortable giving and receiving affection, while others are not. This often depends on one's personality, life experiences, and family background. Regardless of these factors, you need to develop the skills necessary to show affection to your spouse. Being unfamiliar with how to show affection is no excuse for not making the efforts necessary to show this form of love to your spouse. Knowing each other's love languages can help guide you when choosing how to show affection to your spouse.

## B. Understanding love languages as ways to give and receive affection<sup>1</sup>.

One way to think about affection is that there are basically five ways that people give and receive love. These are commonly termed “love languages.” Everyone is born with a core need to be loved. As a couple, you can help meet that need by learning, and then speaking, each other's love language. While most people enjoy receiving love in all of the following ways, generally speaking, one or two will communicate love and affection most powerfully to your spouse.

### 1. Words of Affirmation<sup>2</sup>.

Someone who has a primary love language of Words of Affirmation receives love through encouraging words and compliments. This person can resonate with the truth in the verses in *Proverbs 18:21*, “*Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof*” and *Proverbs 12:25*, “*Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.*” For these individuals, kind words that build up, show appreciation, and communicate loving feelings are an essential part of feeling loved. Your spouse needs to hear the words that affirm his or her worth and abilities in order to believe that you truly love and honor him or her. Loving words, expressed regularly and on an ongoing basis, will provide long-lasting positive effects in your marriage.

#### *Examples of giving Words of Affirmation to your spouse include:*

- Verbalizing your appreciation: “Thanks for helping me out today; it really meant a lot to me that you were there.”
- Giving compliments: “You did a really nice job painting.”
- Noticing: Thanking your spouse for something routinely done but rarely recognized: “Thanks for being a great father/mother to our children.” “I really appreciate your doing my laundry.”

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- Writing: A positive note of encouragement can be kept and reread.
- **NOTE:** People with a primary Words of Affirmation love language may be very sensitive to how requests are phrased. Asking him or her to do something in the form of a request will be accepted much more quickly than if it sounds like a demand.

## 2. Quality Time<sup>3</sup>.

Jesus, amidst all the demands placed on Him, made sure He set aside sufficient quality time to spend with his disciples. For example, *Mark 6:30-31* recorded that, “. . . *the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while. . .*” God loves it when we spend time with Him in prayer and in our meditation on the Word. Likewise, an individual whose love language is Quality Time will feel most loved when his or her spouse spends time, being with or doing an activity with him or her. You can speak this love language by giving undivided, focused attention to your spouse. People with this love language often like to spend time together, having meaningful conversations. When engaging in quality conversation, the focus should be on hearing one another’s thoughts, feelings, and desires rather than problem-solving or giving advice. When Quality Time includes doing activities together, be sure the activity allows time for connection. Going to a high school reunion doesn’t qualify for Quality Time, while walking together in a park does.

### **Examples of spending Quality Time with your spouse include:**

- Finding time daily to connect with your spouse and share thoughts, concerns, and highlights of the day.
- Planning a special outing with just the two of you or doing an activity that your spouse enjoys. For example, you could prepare a picnic and take it to a local park. Or you could go for a walk together before or after work.
- Going for a long drive together, with or without a specific destination.
- Making household tasks more meaningful by doing them together.
- **NOTE:** Be careful not to let work, family responsibilities, and even church activities (e.g., being on too many committees at once) lead you to neglect spending time with your spouse. Occasionally, say no to an invitation and instead spend that time with your spouse.

## 3. Gifts<sup>4</sup>.

From the beginning of time, our heavenly Father has revealed himself as a generous giver of good things: “*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above. . .*” (*James 1:17*). God has given us His Son (*John 3:16*), the beauty of Creation (*Genesis 2:15*), and gifts of the Spirit (*1 Corinthians 12:4*). *Proverbs 17:8* tells us that “*a gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it. . .*” An individual with the primary love language of Gifts sees gifts as visual symbols of thoughtfulness and expressions of love. Gifts can be purchased, found, or made; and the price of the gift is usually of little regard. Small or large, gifts are appreciated when they are given as genuine tokens of love and give evidence of consideration.

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## Examples of giving Gifts to your spouse include:

- Finding a picture of the two of you, framing it and giving it as an unexpected gift.
- Making a homemade greeting card.
- Putting thought into anniversary, birthday, and Christmas gifts. Ask close friends and family for ideas and try to recall things your spouse mentioned he or she would like.
- Finding opportunities for spontaneous, unexpected gifts such as flowers (hand-picked or bought) or a refreshing beverage on a hot day.
- Hiding a small gift or note in your wife's purse or in something your husband takes to work.
- **NOTE:** Buying things for your spouse without showing interest in or spending time with him/her, etc. will seem like you are trying to buy love. Remember that spouses with a Gifts love language feel loved because of the thoughtfulness the gifts reflect.

## 4. Acts of Service<sup>5</sup>.

Jesus gave us the example of being a servant. In *Matthew 20:26-28*, He was clear that we, as His followers, are supposed to have servants' hearts: ". . . *whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*" Individuals with an Acts of Service love language feel loved when their spouses display a servant attitude by their actions. You can express love to a spouse with this love language by helping out with everyday tasks/chores. This will include acts done "on the spur of the moment" as well as times when you plan to set aside time to help out. Acts of Service require various degrees of time, energy, and effort; however, the key is performing them out of love. Also important is receiving them out of love, and not out of a sense of entitlement. Jesus provided us with a clear illustration of expressing love in an Act of Service. He humbly took the role of a servant and washed his disciples' dirty, calloused feet (*John 13:1-10*). Jesus performed this act not out of obligation, but out of love and desire.

## Examples of giving Acts of Service to your spouse include:

- When your spouse requests a chore to be done, trying to get it done before he or she has to repeat the request.
- Getting up a little earlier than normal to do one of the duties your spouse normally does in the morning. For example, if your spouse usually makes the coffee in the morning, take on that job once in a while and then prepare him or her a cup just the way they like it.
- Washing your spouse's car and filling it up with gas.
- Offering to run errands for your spouse.
- Taking the initiative to clean up a room in the house or do some yard work outside.
- Sorting through some of the boxes or piles of stuff that have been neglected for a while.
- Working with your spouse on one of his or her regular tasks such as scrapbooking or working on the car.
- **NOTE:** An attitude on the part of the receiver of the Act of Service that radiates "you owe me for this" is not appropriate. Also, an attitude by the giver of "I'll do it, but I don't like it" doesn't qualify for Acts of Service. Your attitude is the key. Acts of Service shouldn't be used as a way to get something for yourself. That is, don't just help your spouse when you are trying to get on his or her good side so you can then get him or her to go along with your plan on something. Remember that the purpose of Acts of Service is to express love to your spouse.

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## 5. Physical Touch<sup>6</sup>.

Jesus understood the power of touch. He took the time to hold the young children that were brought to Him. Jesus “*put his hands upon them, and blessed them*” (*Mark 10:16*). Also, even though He had the power to heal without physically touching, He took that extra step with many of the people that He healed (e.g., *Matthew 8:3, 15; 9:29*). Hugs, kisses, and other loving touches are appreciated by nearly everyone. However, for someone with the Physical Touch love language, physical reminders are the most important messages of love. If your spouse has this love language, you must learn from him or her what things he or she appreciates the most. It is good to remember, your spouse may have preferences for certain types of touch that he or she finds most appropriate when you are home alone versus out in public. For people who speak the Physical Touch love language, drawing close physically parallels drawing close emotionally.

### **Examples of showing love with Physical Touch include:**

- Making touch a part of your daily routine, hugging or kissing when leaving for the day or coming back together.
- Learning how to give back rubs or massages in a way your spouse enjoys.
- Putting your arm around your spouse when sitting next to him or her.
- Holding hands often: while praying, when walking side by side, when you are sitting by each other.
- **NOTE:** Even within marriage there are appropriate and inappropriate ways to touch. Make sure that you are not touching in ways that seem intrusive or uncomfortable for your spouse. Don't confuse the Physical Touch love language with being sexual. Most physical touches are simple reminders of love that do not lead to sexual intimacy.

## 6. Learning about each other's love language.

Remember that your spouse will most likely respond best to a combination of all of the love languages, even though he or she is likely to have one or two that are most important. Don't be surprised if you and your spouse have different love languages; this is very common. Your goal should be to continually learn about your spouse's love language(s) and to teach your spouse about your love language(s). Expressing love in marriage is part of an ongoing process. It is not a “one-time-fix” or saved only for special occasions. An attitude of, “I told my spouse I loved him/her when we married; he/she should just “know” it now. Why do I have to keep saying/showing it over and over?” is neither Christ-like nor healthy in marriage. Making the effort to express love to your spouse in the ways that are most important to him or her is a true act of love and is honoring to Christ and your spouse.

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## C. Different by design.

### 1. Are differences good or bad?

When two people come together in marriage, they will discover they have things in common and many differences. These similarities and differences stem from things such as temperament, gender, culture, family-of-origin, life experiences, and a host of other sources. God can use your similarities and differences to strengthen your marriage, while Satan desires to use misunderstandings, differences, and conflict to harm your relationship. One of the best ways to prevent Satan from gaining an advantage with us in this area is to work to acknowledge, understand, and appreciate differences and then submit ourselves fully to Christ. Understanding some of the ways in which men and women differ is an important aspect of respecting and appreciating your differences.

### 2. Making differences a strength.

As a married couple, you have the opportunity to appreciate one another's differences and the variety they add to your relationship. In addition, you can learn to compromise and work together when differences try to keep you apart. Gender differences are designed by God to help provide balance in a marriage and guard against the dangers of an unbalanced life<sup>7</sup>. Differing perspectives can shed light on unacknowledged aspects of an issue. The process of accommodating one another is part of building a marriage. The respective qualities of masculinity and femininity in the husband and wife allow the couple to become more Christ-like together.

Gender differences should not be taken to mean that one gender is more loved by God than the other or has more ability to hear from God (*Galatians 3:26-29*). Rather, by God's design gender differences allow husbands and wives to complement and support one another. Husbands and wives have been commissioned with unique roles to fulfill in marriage. In addition, both spouses have gifts that can be used to support these roles and give God glory. Husbands and wives need to remember each spouse possesses inherent value as a child of God. For example, in *1 Peter 3:7* it says, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life..." (see also *Romans 8:17*). Being "heirs together of the grace of life" infers both having ability to connect with God and receive His blessings and gifts.

The discovery of gender and individual differences can be humorous, frustrating, and surprising. Try to see these differences as beneficial to the strengthening of the marriage and to the pursuit of holiness for each individual.

### 3. Insight from *Ephesians 5*.

- a. Cherishing love and respect: In accordance with the scriptural directives to husbands and wives, women and men generally receive love in different ways<sup>8</sup>. Note that the specific words used in *Ephesians 5* point to the need and desire for men to be revered [respected] and for women to be loved [cherished].

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- *Ephesians 5:21-22, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”*
- *Ephesians 5:25, “Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”*
- *Ephesians 5:28-29, “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.”*
- *Ephesians 5:33, “Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”*

- b. Husbands . . . nourish and cherish your wives: The instruction to each husband to “*love his wife even as himself*” (*Ephesians 5:33*) coincides with the primary need of women to be loved. In order to feel loved, women need to perceive and feel that they are secure, cared for, and cherished. Just as taking care of your body allows for a healthy and long life, nourishing and cherishing your wife allows your marriage to be healthy and long-lasting. The Greek word for love in this passage is *agape*, which is unconditional, self-sacrificing love. Husbands need to consistently give this kind of love regardless of the circumstances. Keep in mind women can be particularly sensitive to actions that do not reveal love, such as angry silence or insensitive statements. Each husband is instructed to honor his wife, which means to treat her as a person with immense value (“*giving honour unto the wife,*” *1 Peter 3:7*). This honor needs to be communicated clearly so that when your wife interprets your words and actions, she concludes that she has immense value.
- c. Wives . . . respect your husbands: The instruction to women to “*reverence her husband*” (*Ephesians 5:33*) supports the need for Godly order and for men to perceive they are trusted, admired, and respected. Just as women need to feel loved, secure, and cherished, men need to feel respected. Giving your husband respect is both a way to show him love and point him to Christ. The power of showing respect to your husband is revealed in *1 Peter 3:1*, “*Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.*” The difference in the type of love needed is further revealed in *Titus 2:4*. The older women are instructed to “*teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands.*” The Greek word for love in this verse comes from *phileo*, which refers to a friendly kind of love. In friendship love, respect is key. Husbands need to feel their wives’ support and admiration. Men can be particularly sensitive to actions that do not reveal respect such as negative criticism. Criticism can be particularly damaging to men because it leaves them feeling inadequate and disrespected.

Husbands need to learn how to show love, and wives need to learn how to show respect in ways that are meaningful to their spouses. Communicating love and respect may look different for every couple. Considering the “love languages” is one way to ensure you are communicating clearly.

#### 4. Areas where gender differences often emerge.

In the following section, we will review areas where gender differences between men and women are often present. However, remember these differences may or may not be present in your marriage. In addition, they may emerge more or less strongly in your relationship than in other relationships. The important thing is for you to identify how you and your spouse think, feel, and relate together. For example, this means if there are three billion women on the earth who like to receive flowers, but your wife doesn’t really care for flowers, then you need to adjust to YOUR wife and not compare her to the other three billion women.

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- a. Biological differences between men and women<sup>9</sup>: Some gender differences can be explained with a look at brain structure. The left side of the brain is logical, concrete, and rational; while the right side of the brain is more intuitive, emotional, and artistic. Women tend to have more connections between the two sides of the brain. As a result, women more consistently use both sides of the brain while men tend to use one side at a time. This characteristic can help explain some of the differences between the genders in areas of achievement orientation, emotional expression, and communication.
- b. Communication<sup>10</sup>: Women have a tendency to express and verbalize more than men. When communicating, they will ask questions more readily than men. Women more often want to know the emotional, relational, spiritual, and logical aspects of an issue. They are also generally more perceptive and have an innate ability to read people because they are able to assimilate more information and process it together. Men seek concrete facts. Talking is the source for the solution of many predicaments in a woman's life; whereas, for many men, going away by themselves and thinking is a more direct way to a solution.
- c. Emotions<sup>11</sup>: Men and women often deal with emotions differently. Many women thrive on expressing and receiving emotionally rich information. Some men, however, can be easily overwhelmed by strong expressions of emotion and may perceive their wives as being "moody." Often, men need to think about feelings before sharing them. When feelings arise, a man may have a tendency to act and to try to do something about it rather than talk. Neither way of approaching emotional issues is wrong, as long as they are not characterized by rigidity or excessiveness. Each spouse should strive to be respectful and accommodating of the other. When a wife's moodiness is due to things outside of her control (e.g., hormonal shifts during her menstrual cycle or during pregnancy), husbands should try to be supportive and, at the same time, try to not take it personally.
- d. Connection vs. Compartmentalization<sup>12</sup>: Most women have the ability to multi-task and tune into many things going on at one time. They tend to be aware of the relational dynamics of a situation that men sometimes miss. Many of the thoughts and issues in a woman's life are connected to other thoughts and issues. When asked the question, "What are you thinking about?" most women can provide a response rich with thoughts and issues that have been running through her mind the past few minutes. Conversely, men tend to have a greater ability to focus and concentrate on any one task. They tend to be task-oriented and single-minded. Therefore, many men tend to organize life by trying to break it up into compartments, so they can focus on one task or responsibility at a time. Men are often problem solvers and like to seize, attack, and conquer the issues life brings.
- e. Achievement Orientation: Success and achievement are strong motivators for men. Therefore, a man's work and ability to accomplish is very important to his feeling of self-esteem<sup>13</sup>. Whatever happens at work and how competent he feels strongly impacts his disposition. Conversely, for most women their sense of well-being is reflected in how they feel about their relationships<sup>14</sup>. On average, women focus on tasks related to care giving more than men. Feeling close to others and experiencing harmony in relationships is very motivating to women.

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- f. Sexual desire and needs: Differences in male and female sexuality are related to the various physical, psychological, and emotional differences. Men generally can become sexually aroused quickly and more consistently than women. For a woman, mood and situation play a large part in determining her ability to be aroused. Men tend to be stimulated by sight, while women tend to be stimulated by emotional intimacy. The husband may need little more than the sight of his wife to become aroused, while the wife may need a combination of loving attention, the proper atmosphere, complimentary words, and the right touches. Learning about one another's differences in the area of sexuality takes time and effort. Keep in mind this is an ongoing learning process.

### 5. Are men and women always one way or another?

The most important factor to remember is regardless of the tendencies of women and men, you need to learn about your spouse and how the two of you operate together. Some couples have “reversed roles” in the areas in which many couples find men and women differ. For example, in some marriages, the husband may be the more verbal, emotional one, while the wife is less expressive. If you find you and your spouse have “reversed gender roles” in a few or many areas, don't be concerned. Rather, work together to find effective, Christ-like ways to work things out in your marriage.

### 6. For women.

The following section includes guidance and instruction which coincides with the typical gender differences. Some points may be applicable for your marriage and others may not. Focus on the points that will be helpful for dealing with the differences between you and your husband.

- Be aware that when having a conversation, your husband may not be as interested in the details of an event or situation as you are. This doesn't necessarily mean he doesn't care about you or what happened.
- Realize your husband may not be as intuitive as you; therefore, he may not pick up on subtle hints or be able to read people as well (including yourself).
- Try to respect his process of problem solving and realize it does not reflect negatively on your worth if he wants to think through a predicament by himself.
- Avoid giving too much unsolicited advice to your husband. While your intent may be to help him, he may believe you think he is incompetent. This doesn't mean you shouldn't speak up and share your thoughts with him. Rather, be aware that what you intend to say and how it will feel to him may be very different.
- Realize your husband may be easily overwhelmed by expressions of emotion and may want to do something to lessen the emotion. This may lead you to feel he doesn't care; however, the opposite is often true. Because he cares and doesn't know what to do, he may try to regain control of the situation by shutting down emotions. Your husband may need time and experience to become more comfortable with how you express your emotions.
- Understand your husband may like to focus on one task at a time rather than multitasking as much as you do.
- Try to understand that whatever happens at work will strongly impact your husband's mood and feelings about himself. If something goes wrong at work, he will likely carry that burden home. Talk with him about how you can best help him refocus his mind on the things going on at home.

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## 7. For men.

The following section includes guidance and instruction that coincides with the typical gender differences. Some points may be applicable for your marriage and others may not. Focus on the points that will be helpful for dealing with the differences between you and your wife.

- When your wife feels stressed, she will likely want to talk about the problem and have someone just listen. You need to actively **listen** to her feelings before you offer solutions or advice, if any.
- After actively listening to your wife share her feelings, ask her if she wants you to continue to listen or if she is requesting feedback or suggestions. Many times men believe that they have to “fix” the problem when what their wives really want is for someone to listen, understand, and acknowledge their feelings. Often, just allowing your wife to express herself fully will help the situation.
- Women are often very relationship-oriented. Therefore, men can honor their wives’ strength in this area by realizing the importance of relationships in every aspect of her life.
- Your wife probably has a desire to hear about and share more details about things than you are used to. Try to remember them and incorporate them into conversations with her.
- Demonstrate interest in the details of your wife’s life. Regularly ask questions about the things going on in her life.
- It may be difficult for some women to understand the impact work can have on you. Strive to separate work issues from home issues.

### III. COUPLE QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES.

#### A. Questions and issues for you to discuss.

1. How was affection expressed in your family? How did your parents express affection to each other? How did they express affection to you as a child? How did it feel to you? Too little? Too much? What did you like? Did you wish it was different in any way?
2. What are your expectations for expressing affection in our marriage?
3. On average, how well do you think men understand women and vice versa?
4. Discuss common gender differences (see Section II, C, 4a-4f for examples). Which ones do or do not tend to fit each one of us as individuals?
5. For wives: How important is it for you, as a female, to feel cared for and cherished? Share some specific things your husband can do to help you feel loved and secure.
6. For husbands: How important is it for you, as a male, to feel trusted and respected? Share some specific things your wife can do to show respect and to encourage you.
7. How can our differences cause frustration in our marriage? How can our differences help us develop our relationship with Christ?

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8. Do you know of any life experiences, emotional issues, or things related to your family-of-origin that may make it hard for you to give or receive affection?
9. Both affection and sexuality are important aspects of a marriage. While they are certainly related, they are also distinct from each other. How can we incorporate both elements into our marriage without always expecting affection to lead to being sexual? What do you think happens in marriages where all or most expressions of affection are interpreted as sexual advances? On average, do you think men or women are more likely to shift too quickly from nonsexual forms of affection to being sexual?
10. If, at some point in the future, we are having difficulty being affectionate, what should we do? Where would we turn for guidance and help?

## **B. Couple exercises.**

1. Which love language best describes how you tend to receive and give love? Separately, rank how important each love language (see Section II, B, 1-5) is to you 1 (highest) to 5 (lowest). Compare and discuss your lists. What ways are you similar? Different?
2. Share with one another the many reasons you are grateful for your spouse. Find ways to express your gratitude on a regular basis.
3. Complete the following sentence: "I feel most loved by my spouse when \_\_\_\_\_."
4. Read *Ephesians 5:20-33* together. Discuss what the words mean and how you will apply them to your married life.

# Affection, Love Languages & Gender Differences in Marriage

## References:

Referencing of these materials is not meant to imply an endorsement by the Apostolic Christian Church of America of the author, publisher, or organization that created the materials.

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  4. Ibid., 81-95.
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  13. Eggerichs, *Love and Respect*, 193-203.
  14. Ibid., 125-133.