

The Commencement Address I'll Never Get to Give

May 20, 2014

Graduations mean commencement addresses. Most of which are eminently forgettable, containing feel-good charges to go do great stuff and change the world. But in my experience, they're always given by men, who are some kind of celebrity.

I am neither.

But I have a few thoughts on practical life lessons that newly-minted graduates might use.

"Hey graduates, congratulations. You made it to the cap-and-gown stage. Not without a lot of help and prodding and prayers and frustration from your parents though, right? Thank them. There's not a single thing you are or do or have that they didn't have a part in. Thank them again.

"Speaking of thanking, one of the most important habits you can ever form is gratitude. Especially toward God. He is continually blessing you with everything from the ability to draw your next breath, to your ability to remember your name, to your ability to walk or drive and think and talk and get a job or more education. Thank Him for all those things. Regularly stop and ask yourself, "What would I really miss tomorrow if I didn't give thanks for it today?"—and then thank the Lord for it. A grateful heart is not a complaining heart, or a critical heart, or an entitled heart. Believe me, it will make you a much better person to live with, or work with, or play with, or just be with.

"You've just finished many years of schooling, and you may have been indoctrinated with a bunch of hooey about how wonderful and special you are because of some well-meaning

self-esteem curriculum. You may have thrown away dozens of ribbons or trophies you received just for showing up. Those days are over, because that was never real life. Self-esteem and self-confidence are only gained one way, the hard way: working hard to meet a challenge and not give up until you succeed. You earn self-confidence by doing, not by reciting platitudes in a mirror.

“If you haven’t read Dale Carnegie’s book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, read it. It’s a classic of how to understand people and how they like to be treated. The reason it’s so true is that the book fleshes out the second great commandment, ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’

“For example, when you see a service person, like a waitstaff or toll booth attendant, call him or her by name. One’s name is the sweetest sound on earth to each person, and service personnel are often treated as if they were invisible. Using someone’s name says, ‘You are *not* invisible to me, and I honor you for your service.’ Prospective employees and spouses have been known to disqualify themselves because of the way they treated people with disrespect or contempt when out in public.

“Everyone has an invisible tattoo on their forehead that says ‘Please encourage me.’ Most people have an invisible speech bubble over their heads that says, ‘Do I matter? Please show me I matter.’ Every single person you will ever meet is infinitely valuable as the handcrafted masterpiece of the Creator God, and they deserve to be honored and respected simply because God made them and He loves them.

“Some final pithy words to the wise.

“Listen to your body. You are fearfully and wonderfully made, and it will tell you what it needs.

“Learn to recognize the nudges of the Holy Spirit, and follow them.

“Pray for your future spouse. He or she is out there somewhere. Your prayers WILL make a difference.

“If you wonder if you should be doing something, you probably shouldn’t. If the thought, ‘Should I be doing this?’ even enters your head, it’s an alarm.

“Don’t believe everything you think.

“When you’re on a road trip, never pass up an opportunity to use the restroom. Consider taking some disinfectant and a roll of paper towels with you, and leave it cleaner than you found it.

“And finally, do one good thing every day that no one will see but God. It will build your character and make deposits in your heavenly bank account that you’ll forget about, but He won’t.

“The Lord bless you and keep you. Your real education is about to begin.”

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/the-commencement-address-ill-never-get-to-give/

The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands: A Christian View

Sue Bohlin looks at this important book from a distinctly Christian perspective. Filtering the advice through a biblical worldview increases the purity and strength of the message on how to minister effectively to your husband.

Why We Need This Book

Talk show host Dr. Laura Schlessinger has written a book that is improving thousands of marriages: *The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands*.^{1} We need this book because millions of wives either don't know how to love their husbands wisely and well, or they're too self-centered to see it as important. Dr. Laura credits this dismal condition to forty years of feminist philosophy, "with its condemnation of just about everything male as evil, stupid, and oppressive, and the denigration of female and male roles in families."^{2} While the women's movement certainly had a hand to play in the disintegration of relationships and the family, I believe the core cause is our sinful self-centeredness, just as the Bible says.^{3}

Which is why we need help, and God instructs older women to train younger women to love their husband and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.^{4} *The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands* is a great resource for learning these important values and skills.

God gives us great power as women. Dr. Laura says, "Men are borne of women and spend the rest of their lives yearning for a woman's acceptance and approval. . . . Men admittedly are putty in the hands of a woman they love. Give him direct communication, respect, appreciation, food and good lovin', and he'll do just about anything you wish—foolish or not."^{5}

We'll be looking at these aspects of the proper care and feeding of husbands in this article, starting with a man's need for *direct communication*.

- We can improve on communication by doing it less. God made us verbal creatures, which can frustrate men with the overwhelming amount of our words. Instead of expecting her husband to be a girlfriend (and men make wonderful husbands,

but not girlfriends), the wise wife selects for true connecting value, gives the bottom line first, and chooses her timing well.

- Men make terrible mind readers, so be direct. Dropping subtle hints doesn't work with most men, and it doesn't mean a man is insensitive, uncaring, or oblivious.
- Spell out whether you want help and advice, or if you're just venting. God made men to want to be our heroes, so understand you can frustrate him if he can't fix what's hurting you because all you want is someone to listen.
- And finally, take whatever he says at face value. Women tend to overanalyze men when they are just not that complicated.

Respect

A listener to Dr. Laura's radio show named Edgar wrote, "There are a few things that men want so bad they would do anything for it. I think a good number of men want respect more than love. They like to feel they have some power. I nearly cry when you tell a woman caller to respect her husband. There is so much selfishness in the world—in marriages. Prosperity has allowed women to be so independent, and thus so selfish. I always feel as though I come last—my feelings come last, my needs come last."[\[6\]](#)

"A good number of men want respect more than love." God knew this when He made us. His commands to husbands and wives in Ephesians 5:33 reflects each one's deepest needs: "Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." Dr. Emerson Eggerichs of LoveandRespect.com points out that this verse commands a husband to love his wife. Why? She needs love like she needs air to breathe. This same verse commands a wife to respect her husband. Why? He needs respect like he needs air to breathe.[\[7\]](#)

- Respect means treating someone in a way that builds him up and doesn't tear him down, never denigrating or attacking. [{8}](#)
- Respect means always treating the other person with the dignity they deserve as a person made in the image of God.
- Respect means grasping that a man's needs and wants are every bit as valid and important as a woman's needs and wants.
- Respect means not venting to others, *especially* the children. One woman wrote to Dr. Laura, "No emotional outlet is worth damaging my husband's reputation." [{9}](#)

There are three A's that men long for from their wives: attention, affection, and affirmation. Respect involves paying attention to what they do simply because they're the ones doing it.

Respect means allowing the other person to be different and do things differently than you. One repentant wife told Dr. Laura, "And in the end, it doesn't much matter that they eat PBJ sandwiches for breakfast, lunch and dinner for a day or that one tooth brushing gets overlooked or whatever little thing that used to set me off!" [{10}](#)

One way to give respect is to give grace instead of resenting the things he does that complicate your life (like leaving drinking glasses in the living room or clothing on a chair). Ask yourself, "Is he *intentionally* doing this to bug me? To make my life difficult? If he were to die tomorrow, what wouldn't I give to have him back leaving these things out?"

Appreciation

Ask any woman what she wants, and near the top of her list she'll tell you, "I want to be acknowledged and appreciated for the things I do." Well, men want the same thing!

A man named Evan wrote to Dr. Laura: "My wife feels that if

she doesn't remind me again and again, something won't get done. But the fact is, it makes me feel like her child and that Mommy needs to check up on me. It's degrading. I want to be admired. I want to be acknowledged for being the breadwinner and making sure that we are all well taken care of. My greatest pleasure is when I feel like her hero. Like her 'man.' Not her boy."

[\[11\]](#)

It doesn't matter what a husband's primary love language is, every man wants to be shown appreciation for who he is and what he does.

I love to suggest to young wives and mothers, "Keep a gratitude journal to help you be on the lookout for the things your husband does that you appreciate. Every night, write down three things you noticed. And then *tell him* the kinds of things that are in your book!"

- Thank him for going to work every morning even when he doesn't feel like it.
- Thank him for being faithful to you.
- Thank him for loving you.
- Thank him for giving you children—or even desiring to.
- Thank him for taking out the garbage, and changing the oil in your car, and mowing the yard.
- Thank him for bringing home his paycheck and not spending it on gambling or booze or drugs or women.

And then there's the opposite of appreciation. The universal complaint of men who e-mailed Dr. Laura about her book "was that their wives criticize, complain, nag, rarely compliment or express appreciation, are difficult to satisfy, and basically are not as nice to them as they'd be to a stranger

ringing their doorbell at three A.M.!”[{12}](#) So allow me to make some suggestions:

- Request, don’t demand. Demanding is rude and disrespectful.
- Don’t nag. If you have to ask more than once, ask as if it were the first time you were making the request.
- Keep your mouth shut about things that don’t matter. Ask yourself, is this the hill you want to die on?
- Don’t be controlling—which is micromanaging. Dr. Laura wrote, “When women micromanage, their husbands give up trying to please them, and then the wives complain that their men don’t do anything for them.”[{13}](#)

Proverbs says, “Kind words are like honey—sweet to the soul and healthy for the body.”[{14}](#) (This is truer no place more than in marriage.) Let your words be kind and full of appreciation.

Support

A man named Roy wrote to Dr. Laura with some good advice for wives: “If you can’t accentuate the positive, at least acknowledge it. The world is full of messages to men that there are standards we don’t meet. There is always another man who is more handsome, more virile, or more athletic than we are. None of that matters if the most important person in our life looks up to us, accepts us as we are, and loves us even though we aren’t perfect. . . . All I know is that the husband who has a wife who supports him and praises him for the positive things he does is the envy of all the other men who have to live with criticism, sarcasm, and constant reminders of their failures.”[{15}](#)

Men desperately want and need the support of their wives. This is reflected in what God reveals in His Word when He says, “It

is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”{16} And through the apostle Paul, God instructs wives to relate to their husbands in a way that meets this need when He says, “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.”{17}

Submission is basically giving support with a willing, cooperative heart.

A wife’s submission includes knowing her gifts and strengths, and using them to serve her husband and family.

Service has a bad name, but both husbands and wives are called to serve God first and then each other; husbands are called to sacrificially love and serve their wives with Jesus as their pattern.{18}

So what does support look like?

- Believing in him. Telling him, “You have what it takes.” Being his #1 fan.
- Cultivating a cooperative heart.
- Being generous and openhearted—willing to use your gifts and strengths to help him succeed.
- Understanding the importance of making him look good: never saying anything negative in public.
- Creating a home that’s a safe haven from the world.
- Having a warm heart with a positive, cheerful demeanor. Women set the temperature of the home; we are thermostats, not thermometers, of the family. (On the other hand, Proverbs says “A quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping on a rainy day; restraining her is like restraining the wind or grasping oil with the hand.”{19})
- Being interested in him and his life.

- Showing thoughtfulness. What does he like? Do it.
- And though by no means exhaustive, it also means being a person of faithfulness and integrity. That means keeping your promises and being dependable. As Proverbs 31 puts it, “Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.”[{20}](#)

Good Lovin’

Dr. Laura writes that men need to feel the approval, acceptance and attachment from their women that comes from physical intimacy.[{21}](#) For women, emotional intimacy leads to physical intimacy. For men, it’s the other way around; physical intimacy is the key to opening their hearts.

A man named Chris writes: “I don’t understand why women don’t understand that sex is a man’s number one need for his wife. It’s not just the act and sensation of pleasure, but it’s the acceptance by a woman of her man. There’s a communion that happens during intercourse that will bond a man to his woman, and he in turn will then begin to give of himself emotionally to her.”[{22}](#)

Wives can discover that giving themselves sexually to their husbands with a warm, open-hearted, loving spirit, can be the most effective encouragement to getting their husbands to open up emotionally.

“What attracts men to women is their femininity, and femininity isn’t only about appearance, it’s also about behaviors. Looking womanly and behaving sweetly and flirtatiously are gifts wives give to their husbands.” We see this modeled in the Song of Solomon, where the King’s bride displays her feminine charms in a holy seduction of her husband, and the way she tells him what she loves about his body.[{23}](#)

Instead, our culture has things backward; many unmarried girls and women flaunt their bodies with a total lack of modesty or propriety. Once they marry, it's flannel nightgowns, wool socks, and no makeup.

Dr. Laura calls wives to give themselves sexually to their husbands, even when they don't feel like it, as an act of love. It's really no different, she points out, than the fact that they expect their husbands to go to work and earn money to support the family even on days they don't feel like it.

She's echoing what God said in 1 Corinthians 7 about husband and wife both fulfilling their marital duty to each other because each one's body belongs not just to themselves but to each other. He also said not to deprive each other for extended periods of time lest we be tempted.

Consider the wisdom of radio listener Herb: "Sex is to a husband what conversation is to a wife. When a wife deprives her husband of sex for days, even weeks on end, it is tantamount to his refusing to talk to her for days, even weeks. Think of it that way, wives, and realize what a deleterious impact enforced sexual abstinence has on a good man who is determined to remain faithful." [\[24\]](#)

I can't recommend *The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands* highly enough. In fact, I gave a copy to my new daughter-in-law! Let me close with one more piece of wisdom from Dr. Laura: "[M]en are simple creatures who come from a woman, are nurtured and brought up by a woman, and yearn for the continued love, admiration and approval of a woman. . . Women need to better appreciate the magnitude of their power and influence over men, and not misuse or abuse it." [\[25\]](#) Amen!

Notes

1. Laura Schlessinger, *The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands*, New York: HarperCollins, 2004.
2. Schlessinger, 3.

3. Jeremiah 17:9
4. Titus 2:4
5. Schlessinger, xvii.
6. Schlessinger, 1.
- 7.
- <http://www.loveandrespect.com/Articles/article.asp?aid=43&cat=1>
8. Schlessinger, 157.
9. Schlessinger, 159.
10. Schlessinger, 158.
11. Schlessinger, 31.
12. Schlessinger, 37-38.
13. Schlessinger, 57.
14. Prov. 16:24
15. Schlessinger, 47-48.
16. Gen. 2:18.
17. Eph. 5:22, 24.
18. Eph. 2:25, 28.
19. Prov. 27:15.
20. Prov. 31:11.
21. Schlessinger, 25.
22. Schlessings, 129.
23. Song of Solomon 5:10-16
24. Schlessinger, 119.
25. Schlessinger. 10.

© 2005 Probe Ministries

“Why Don’t You Respect

Others' Beliefs?"

How come you can't accept other religions and beliefs instead of always trying to convert them to Christianity? I was brought up in a Christian family and was always taught that you should accept others for who they are instead of forcing them to be how YOU want them to be.

I personally am an atheist and have told my family that since I was old enough to fully understand my own feelings on religion, and my own family have not tried to convert me as they respect what I think and feel. But when I read your replies to people's e-mails you try to convert people you don't even know. I fully respect your beliefs and thought that since you were Christians you could respect others. I am not trying to be disrespectful but I have friends from almost every religion in the world and yet even when we come to together we never try to (for lack of a better word) force, our views on each other instead we respect each other. I am sorry if I am sounding rude when I say this but would you please email me back with your views on this and I will gladly read them and attempt to understand them.

Dear _____,

I very much appreciate the respectful tone of your letter. Bless you!

There is a difference between accepting others for who they are and forcing them to be someone you want them to be. I am not aware of anything on our website that attempts to force anyone to do anything; we do OFFER the way to know God through a personal relationship with His son Jesus, and we do OFFER a Christian perspective on many topics, but I would be grateful if you would help me see any place where we're forcing anything on anyone. Especially since everyone who reads our website freely chooses to come here and freely chooses to

continue reading once they discover our position.

We don't have the power to convert anyone. We will do our best to explain why Christianity makes the most sense because it's true, and you have no doubt discovered that we have a lot of confidence in our position. But everything we say comes from a deep understanding that God created us with the ability to choose. We understand the power of influence, and we try to use whatever influence we have by way of what we have learned about the evidence for Christianity being true to help others understand what is right and true.

Many people think that respecting others' views and beliefs is the same thing as affirming that they are all equally valid, and we can't do that. For instance, what if you met someone who believed that red lights mean go and green lights mean stop. Would you respect that view? Really? Or would you do your best to convince the person believing it that it is a wrong and dangerous view to hold?

That's what we do. We believe that God has spoken to our world through the Bible and through the person of Jesus Christ, and thus we can know truth because God has communicated it to us. And those who believe differently from what God has specifically said, hold wrong and dangerous views because it can keep them separated from God forever.

I hope you understand us better now, even if you don't agree. And if you get to the point where your life seems pointless and meaningless—because if there is no God there is no meaning-giver—then we'll be here to help you.

Respectfully,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries