

## TEN THINGS I'VE LEARNED ABOUT BEING A HUSBAND — AFTER 31 YEARS OF MARRIAGE

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1. **Love.** I've been commissioned by God to love my wife as Christ loves the Church. This is the umbrella principle; everything else flows from this responsibility and privilege (Eph 5:25ff).
2. **Leadership.** My love for my wife involves and requires that I exert leadership in our relationship. My headship of my wife means I'm responsible for her spiritual growth and well-being. To do this, I must be seeking God and growing personally. Only out of the storehouse of my own soul's growth in God can I assist my wife to grow spiritually.
3. **Priorities.** I'm a Christian, then a husband, then a father. "If you love father, sister, wife, brother, more than me . . ." And if you are a father, you are responsible to lead in the growth and nurture of your children as well (Eph 6:1-4). My wife longs for me to exert leadership with the children while I also show them and her that she is "first" in my heart at home.
4. **Acceptance.** My wife is unique, and so in many ways, she is not like me. I need to accept who she is, prayerfully and sensitively seeking to assist her in changing what is sinful and needs to be changed, and accepting what is "just different."
5. **Understanding.** I need to live with my wife in an understanding way (1 Pet 3:7), to learn her needs, her sensitivities. I should seek to know the desires and felt needs of my wife and, when appropriate and possible, fulfill these. I need to discover her "language of love" and make every effort to love her in ways she feels loved.
6. **Listening.** One of my wife's biggest and most real needs is my attentive and respectful listening ear. She loves to share her experiences, thoughts, ideas, feelings, concerns, hurts, joys, etc. I can minister to my wife more than one might think by offering her caring, responsive, and respectful listening and interaction.
7. **Sexuality.** My wife is my only legitimate sexual experience, and I am hers. So, learning to love sexually with increasing skill and pleasure is vitally important to the satisfaction and intimacy of our marriage. And all of this requires that I cultivate the skill and habit of romancing her throughout our marriage. For my wife, sex w/o romance is a duty; sex in the context of romance is a delight.
8. **Work.** As important as work is to a man's identity and fulfillment, I must not allow work to overshadow my commitment to and time with my wife first, and also to my children. On the other hand, my wife takes pride in my work, so I want to honor God and her through it.
9. **Home.** She cares much about our home. The "honey-do" list is far more important to her than she is likely to let on. In love for her, I must pay attention to her requests and treat them as important.
10. **Team.** My wife and I are a team, and I should seek ways to involve her in my world, and involve myself in her world.