



MAN UP!

Workout #6: **LEADING IN MARRIAGE** *Husbands, love your wives*

This next workout will feel like doing 12-sets of bench press every day for a week. It's going to hurt, but oh, the bennies it will bring! This week we dive into what it means to lead in your marriage.

Yes, I realize that some of you are not married. Regardless, we will all have come in contact with men who struggling in their relationship with their wife. Sometimes that man just happens to be the guy in the mirror.

First order of business, think back over our previous lessons. Think of the biblical men who wrecked their leadership and why? Consider how Ananias (Acts 5) failed to lead in his marriage. Think of the challenges to our manhood that we face in 2010. How does that make leadership in marriage difficult?

Time for a bit of inventory. In the space below, list some areas within marriage where the husband must lead. Right next to that, list the areas where you feel God has given you special grace, areas where you feel strong in your marriage. Now the toughy: where do you feel you are not leading as you should? If you are not yet married, consider marriages you with which you are familiar.

Leadership Areas

Areas of Strength

Areas of Weakness

Why are you strong in some areas? Why are you weak in others?

Into the word of God, boys. Feel the burn! What does God say about how we should lead our wives? Get as practical and personal in the application as you can.

1. 1 Peter 3:7
2. Ephesians 5:31, 33
3. Colossians 3:19

Now, gents, read through the attached articles and **answer the questions** I've included at the end.

*May God, through the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and with the Truth of his word,
empower us to love our wives as Christ loves the Church!*

THE HUSBAND WHO NEVER STOPPED LOVING

One of the most striking examples of a husband who never stopped engaging his wife, even as she tried to deal their marriage a deathblow, came to me in an e-mail written by the wife after she and her husband had traveled six hundred miles to attend one of our conferences. When they arrived at the conference, their marriage was held together by a tattered thread. They both agreed it was the best conference they had ever attended, but they went back home with the wife still feeling very negative about the marriage. She was still tired of her life and her husband. But her husband wouldn't give up, and the rest of her e-mail tells the story:

"Suppose you love those who love you. Should anyone praise you for that? Even 'sinners' love those who love them"
(Luke 6:32 NIRV).

We are still together today because, for the past few months, he has done exactly what you talked about at your conference concerning "His Love Regardless of Her Respect." He loved me when I was not lovable at all and held on to our marriage and his family, when there was absolutely NOTHING to hold on to.

This past October I asked him to please leave the house. I wanted to be alone, I wanted space, and I just felt like I didn't love him anymore. Reluctantly, he left for a couple of weeks. . . . I knew that my life and the life of the girls would drastically change with a divorce. I thought about the shared visitation and how we would also have to sell our home, which we recently finished

remodeling, but I didn't care, I just wanted out! [Meanwhile] he prayed, studied marriage books and tapes, and made a decision to love me no matter what.

The girls were really starting to miss him not being around, so we decided he would return home "until further notice." Well, he would hold my hand every night and pray for me and for our marriage, as I stared up at the ceiling anxiously waiting for him to finish. He would leave little notes, or a little flower on the bathroom mirror or in my car. So many little things he would do to show me that he loved me and wasn't going to let this marriage end easily.

It just irritated me. I thought, *Can't he understand that I don't love him, that I don't want to be with him anymore? Why is he trying so hard?* I didn't feel that high "in love" feeling for him anymore. My needs weren't being met so I wanted out—very selfish and immature. . . .

I was emotionally going through something that neither of us really understood, but he stayed there and loved me through it. I'll spare you all the little extra details, but I eventually broke. No woman in her right mind could let go of that much love and commitment.

[Now] I am very much in love with my husband. I've learned that love is not a feeling, it's a choice, a commitment. We didn't become a statistic because my husband chose to love me no matter what my reaction toward him would be. It's really humbling to look back and see how loving and patient he was with me (trust me, it wasn't easy) and how he, only through the strength of Christ, saved our marriage. I can't say we're completely out of the tunnel yet, but we are certainly very close.

There is really little to add to this woman's story except, "Amen." Her husband understood, even when it seemed there was no way to

understand. Her husband engaged her even when she would roll her eyes to the ceiling as he prayed (talk about disrespect, not to mention irreverence). The bottom line is, he won the game—*they* won the game—and they are together today because he was willing to do whatever it took to stop the Crazy Cycle. Then she finally got the message and wanted to stop it too.

But like the husband who never gave up, they have to be willing to do whatever it takes. In saying “do whatever it takes,” I mean winning within the boundaries of “the law of Christ” (1 Corinthians 9:21). Christ’s law may mean constant giving and forgiving: “Love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8; Matthew 5:38-46). But Christ’s law may also mean turning someone away from “a multitude of sins” (James 5:20; Matthew 18:15). Love must be tough. To know which approach to take in your marriage, seek godly, wise counsel.

2

TO LOVE HER DOESN'T MEAN BECOMING “PINK”

Note that when I ask you to trust your instrument panel and pursue a course of love with your wife, I am not calling on you to become a woman. We make a huge mistake in the church, particularly among evangelicals. We tell men to “get in tune with their feminine side,” yet we don’t tell women in get in tune with their masculine side.

Men are not to be effeminate (see 1 Corinthians 6:9). When I challenge a husband to love, I am not calling on him to become pink. Instead, I call on him to be a man of honor—to adjust his blue sunglasses and blue hearing aids a bit and put on love.

The truth is, it is easier for many a man to die for honor than to move toward a contemptuous wife in a loving way, saying, “I believe I was wrong. Can we talk about this?” To turn to your wife in the middle of a conflict and say, “I am sorry. Will you forgive me?” takes guts. I know because I have been there. It isn’t pleasant, but it works power-

fully. Over time it becomes easier, but it is never natural. Even so, this response gives you the power to drain the negativity out of your wife in conflict after conflict.

And the best part of it is that you, the male who tends to see and hear life through blue, will touch your pink wife in the tender and loving way she desires. Some wives simply melt. Others warm up considerably. At the very least, she will soften and you can talk through whatever the situation may be. You will gain the right to appeal to her to understand your need for respect and to join you on the Energizing Cycle.

As we study C-O-U-P-L-E, my prayer is that you will discover how Scripture describes God's heart and will learn what it means to be a husband. You won't have to become a Bible scholar and study dozens of passages. I'll show you only a small number of verses but they will all be significant because they spell love to a wife. As one husband told me, "The information is working. I have seen the glow in my wife's eyes when I apply it and defeat and despair in her eyes when I fail to practice the principles you are trying to teach me through your material and God's Word."

*When you act on
C-O-U-P-L-E, you will
"enjoy life with your
wife, whom you love"
(Ecclesiastes 9:9 NIV).*

Article 1:

1. How does being a man make you uniquely suited to endure the storms that arise within a marriage?
2. As a man, and as the leader within the marriage, how ought we handle situations where we have wronged our brides? How should we endure the consequences that ensue?
3. When should you stop loving your wife? Should you ever leave her for a time?

Article 2:

1. Some men handle crisis in their marriage by putting on a skirt. How do we handle a crisis like men and at the same time love our wives.
2. If the tables are turned, how do we lead in the relationship if our bride has done something to skewer us to the marrow?