

Women of Influence

”Living out the Promises and Dreams of your Wedding Day”

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Has the reality of your marriage lived up to or surpassed your excitement as you envisioned your life together on your wedding day? Are you living out your “happily ever after”?

As a therapist and life coach, I experience many women who believe they have settled for something far below their marital hopes and dreams and passionately yearn for greater excellence. What is missing?

Most of us have an image of ideals in marriage; a “one and only” mate, an ideal family, that perfect Valentine’s dinner. We allow our dreams to be shattered by imperfect spouses who don’t understand our blueprint. We can choose to cherish the image and destroy the person or cherish the person and put the image in perspective.

How do we live out the loving promise of our wedding day expectations? There is hope very much within your grasp and control. It begins with you!

Marital research suggests that wives and husbands speak the same words but experience divergent understanding of what words like “love” mean in a marital context. Clearly, we all desire to be “loved”, but love to a man often times looks more like respect and love to a woman begins with emotional connection and safety. Same word, different interpretation!

As we evaluate the quality of how well I am loving my husband, attention must be given to loving him as he can receive it. Let’s start by evaluating the tangible actions that he can understand, affirm and receive as love.

Start by asking your husband to paint a picture of how each of you are doing. Don’t ask him if he feels loved by you” (he will want to be

honorably and say yes) but help him paint a picture of those times in the marriage when he felt most respected. Ask him to describe what about that situation made it special. With that insight, ask him to evaluate your “everyday” respect for him, those times when you could have loved (respected) him differently in specific situations. As he describes these things, make a note that this is how he describes and receives “love”. It may sting but the investment in him will in a healthy marriage pay huge relational dividends.

If I were to ask my husband this question, he would describe those moments when I am his cheerleader, encourager, affirmer. He would say he is most respected (loved) when I could cut his legs out from under him with criticism for an ill-advised statement or action and instead look to his heart and character. When I ask him if he wants anything, he playfully asks for “world peace” but I really know that’s his euphemism for a warm smile and affirmation that all is well for me and us. My joy and peace are important indicators to him that love is present. He draws his respect (love) from knowing that he is shepherding an environment of emotional safety (love) for me. Make the things that are important to him important to you.

It’s surprising (but it shouldn’t be) how much of a difference we can make in our marriages if we focus on what we can do differently rather than focus on our spouses deficiencies. Some wives may protest “but my husband does not deserve my love and respect”. Be the first to respond in loving and respectful ways, not because he deserves it but because it’s the right thing to do. Remember the qualities that drew you to him like a magnet originally and while they may not be apparent, your affirming desire to respect (love) him may assist you to see him with the same lens that that drew your attention originally.

Our “happily ever after” is possible if it starts with me and begins with small steps. Plan a date and ask your husband to paint a picture of how he could be loved and respected by you. You might be surprised.

*** Look for future articles related to “living out the dreams of your wedding day”**