

# *MATE SERVICE*

***Biblical Servanthood: the key to a lifelong healthy marriage***



- 1. Sacrificial Husband**
- 2. Sacrificial Wife**
- 3. Sacrificial Marriage**
- 4. Sacrificial Love**



**By Jerry Schmoyer**

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# MATE SERVICE



## 1. Sacrificial Husband

Two brothers decided to play on sand banks by the river's edge. Because the town depended on the river, it was regularly dredged and sand deposited in great mounds beside the river. Children loved playing on the huge sand piles, but they are very dangerous. The sand dries on the top with rigid crusts that conceal cavernous internal voids formed by the escaping water in the wet sand underneath. If a child climbs on a mound of sand that has such a hidden void, the external surface easily collapses into the cavern. Sand from higher on the mound then rushes into the void, trapping the child in a sinkhole of loose sand. This is exactly what happened to the two brothers as they raced up one of the larger mounds.

When the boys did not return home at dinnertime, family and neighbors organized a search. They found the younger brother. Only his head and shoulders protruded from the mound. He was unconscious from the pressure of sand on his body. The searchers began digging frantically. When they had cleared the sand to his waist, he roused to consciousness.

"Where is your brother?" the rescuers shouted.

"I'm standing on his shoulders," replied the child.

With the sacrifice of his own life, the older brother had lifted the younger to safety. So, too, did the One who is not ashamed to call Himself our brother. We live eternally by standing before God on the righteousness that Jesus Christ provided at the cost of his own life.

He is our example of 'bearing one another's burdens.'

**SERVANTHOOD DESCRIBED Eph 5:21-6:1 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church- 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery-but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.**

***Matt 20:26-28 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."***

Two words are used for 'servant' in this passage. 'Diakonos' (v. 26) means 'to run errands' and was used for someone who was an attendant, a waiter on tables, someone who did menial tasks. Our word 'deacon' comes from this word. 'Doulos' (v. 27) means literally "in bondage, a slave." "When we think of a servant, in our sense of the word, we think of a man who gives a certain agreed part of his time to his master, and who receives a certain agreed wage for doing so. Within that agreed time he is at the disposal and in the command of his master. But, when that time ends, he is free to do exactly as he likes. But in Paul's time, the status of the slave was quite different. Quite literally he had no time which belonged to himself. He had no moment when he was free. Every single moment of his time belonged to his master. He was the absolutely exclusive possession of his master, and there was no one single moment of his life when he could do as he liked. In Paul's time a slave could never do what he liked; it was impossible for him to serve two masters, because he was the exclusive possession of one master. That is the picture that is in Paul's mind."

**Servanthood starts in he mind.** It is an attitude first, then shows itself in an action. The attitude of servanthood is always active, while acts of servanthood are only occasional. Acts must be based on attitude. It's the opposite of what our flesh (sin nature) naturally does. It's not what comes normally to us to do. How many children, say "A servant" when asked what they want to do when they grow up? Jesus is our only real example of servanthood. The rest of us are more like the mother of James and John who wanted the first place. Paul uses Jesus as an example:

***"When we think of a servant, in our sense of the word, we think of a man who gives a certain agreed part of his time to his master, and who receives a certain agreed wage for doing so. Within that agreed time he is at the disposal and in the command of his master. But, when that time ends, he is free to do exactly as he likes. But in Paul's time, the status of the slave was quite different. Quite literally he had no time which belonged to himself. He had no moment when he was free. Every single moment of his time belonged to his master. He was the absolutely exclusive possession of his master, and there was no one single moment of his life when he could do as he liked. In Paul's time a slave could never do what he liked; it was impossible for him to serve two masters, because he was the exclusive possession of one master. That is the picture that is in Paul's mind."***

**Servanthood is about strength, not weakness** (v. 6). It's about security, not insecurity. One is secure enough to do whatever asked to do. It's about giving, not being taken advantage of (v. 8a). If you give willingly, it can't be taken from you. It's about taking care of another's world, not taking care of my world first (v. 8a). It's about being a sacrifice, but not a doormat. It's about pleasing God, not the person you are serving, even if they don't notice or appreciate.

**I. REQUIREMENTS OF SERVANT HEADSHIP** Now let's apply this about servanthood to a husband's role in marriage. A husband is the head of his family, but he is to lead as a

servant. SERVANT HEADSHIP is the key phrase to describe his role. Lets look at this more closely:

**Servant headship assumes responsibility.** Like Christ as the head of the church took responsibility for our needs, even to the extent of dying for us, the man is responsible to meet the needs of his family. Think of a covered wagon going west. The wife takes care of the wagon, handling the daily details of life. She does a good job of that. The man, though, has the role of scout. He has to have the big picture in mind: where they are, where they want to go and how to get there. He looks out for dangers and knows safe camping spots. He assumes responsibility to get the family to its destination.



**Servant headship actively initiates.** A man can't sit back and let his family find its own way, simply following along with what they decide. Neither can he exercise self-seeking power plays for his own benefit. However, for every husband who uses his headship position to justify harsh dictatorship, there are a hundred who go to the other extreme and abdicate their responsibility by not doing all they should. Ask the average Christian wife if they want their husband to take more or less of a leadership role in the family and most will answer more. Often the pattern is that the man does not actively lead so the wife nags him to do so. Then he explodes and runs things in a rage for a short time until he drifts back to his normal passive pattern. Men go to one extreme or another, but have a hard time finding middle-of-the-road balance.

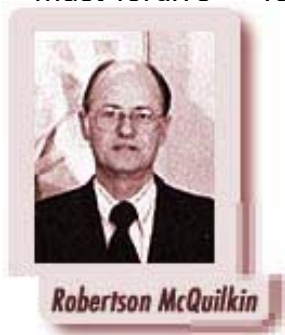
**Servant headship leads by serving.** Again Christ is our example. What would Jesus do? Men are His under-shepherds. We are to represent Him by acting in a way He would act if He were in our position. A man does not have any authority to act in any way other than the way Jesus would act. Man does not have carte blanche authority to rule his family, he only has delegated authority to represent Jesus in his family. His role to his family is like that of a pastor to his church. Servant headship is the conscientious and loving use of the authority God grants a husband to ensure that a home (and all its members) honor God and experience His blessings.

**Servant headship gives, not takes.** It is not a matter of if my wife meets my needs but if I meet hers. To alter what John Kennedy said: "Ask not what your wife can do for you, but what you can do for your wife." It is not wondering what God expects of my wife to make her better for me, but what He expects of me to make life better for her. Thus it truly takes personal sacrifice to be a servant-leader. Jesus-style love is the opposite of the world's power-based 'love.' Christian love means putting the other person first, seeking the other person's well being regardless of what it costs. It doesn't mean a man has the final word, but the final responsibility. That responsibility is to do what is right and best for her.

**Servant headship seeks to glorify the wife.** Again as Christ does for us, a husband is to make his wife feel full of worth. Men are to encourage, praise and build up their wives.

**Servant headship communicates forgiveness.** Marriage is the most important and most difficult relationship in which to practice forgiveness. It is natural to blame others, as Adam blamed Eve and she blamed the serpent. Forgiving means to give up any right to have another hurt for the hurt they have caused you. One takes the hurt and goes to God for healing. This is especially hard in marriage because our mate can hurt us quicker and deeper than anyone else. Also, we can hurt them back just as quickly and easily. God commands forgiveness (Ephesians 4:31-32). If we don't forgive it opens us to demonic influence (Eph 4:26-27). To be like Jesus we must forgive. Jesus said that when we offend someone we are responsible to go and ask for forgiveness before we can worship (Mt 5:23f). When we are the one offended then, too, we

must forgive – 490 plus times a day (Mt. 18:21-35). Either way, it's your move to restore the relationship!



**Servant headship means loving unconditionally.** As Jesus loves us unconditionally, so we men are to love our wives unconditionally. God's love for us is unconditional agape love and we are to love our wives the same way. Robertson McQuilkin is a good example of that. He was the president of Columbia Bible College and Seminary until 1990 when he resigned college and speaking circuit to take care of wife, MURIEL, who was afflicted with Alzheimer's disease. During the last 2 years of his presidency she would follow him to college, walking ½ mile 10 times a day just to be near him. She didn't know him but was distressed when around others and peaceful when around him. One night when she took off her shoes she found her feet bloody from all the walking. He washed her feet (Christ-like), bathed, dressed her, did all house work, etc. He could have had her institutionalized, but instead quit own job to take care of her. She didn't know him, but he was the only one who could control her. When asked how he felt about having to take care of her he replied, "I don't HAVE to care for her, I GET to take care of her. To me it is a privilege and an honor.

**Servant headship loves even when hurting.** It's one thing to love your wife even if she unknowingly hurts you, but it's even harder to love her unconditionally when she purposefully hurts you as only she can. Jesus loved us even when we brought Him nothing but pain. Men must take their pain and unmet needs to God and let Him alone meet them. Remember, she is a sinner, but so are you! She's self-centered, but so are you. That's when a man can and must show God's love to his wife. Ask God to give you His love for her, to fill you with His Holy Spirit (and the fruit of love), and to have Him love her through you. Loving your wife is not to love her as a saint but as a sinner. If you love her just for her saintliness you don't really love her at all.

**Servant headship means providing care for the wife.** Paul says we as men are to "care for" our wives as we do our own body (Eph 5:28). This means we are to nourish, bring up, feed, care for, etc. Physically we are to do our best to provide enough income. Emotionally we are to meet her needs for love and security. Spiritually we are to lead in prayer and devotions. Intellectually we are to lead in teaching our children and informing our mates about things we find of interest and importance. This consists of being a servant in the little things that make up each day. Fred Craddock, in an address to ministers, caught the practical implications of consecration. "To give my life for Christ appears glorious," he said. "To pour myself out for others ... to pay the ultimate price of martyrdom--I'll do it. I'm ready, Lord, to go out in a blaze of glory. "We think giving our all to the Lord is like taking a \$1,000 bill and laying it on the table--'Here's my life, Lord. I'm giving it all.' "But the reality for most of us is that he sends us to the bank and has us cash in the \$1,000 for quarters. We go through life putting out 25 cents here and 50 cents there. Listen to the neighbor kid's troubles instead of saying, 'Get lost.' Go to a committee meeting. Give up a cup of water to a shaky old man in a nursing home. "Usually giving our life to Christ isn't glorious. It's done in all those little acts of love, 25 cents at a time. It would be easy to go out in a flash of glory; it's harder to live the Christian life little by little over the long haul."

**Servant headship relies on the wife's skills, too.** Allow your wife to outgrow you in areas of her strengths. Marriage is like climbing a mountain. Mountain climbers always work together to help each other. If both don't make it, neither will make it!

**II. REASONS FOR SERVANT HEADSHIP** Why should a man go to all this trouble to be a servant head? For one thing, **God commands it** (Eph 5:21-6:1). We must do it in

obedience to God. For another thing, **God blesses it** (Eph 5:31). Man isn't complete until he is 'one flesh' with his wife.

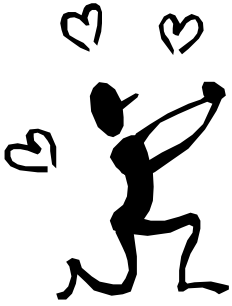
**III. RESOURCES FOR SERVANT HEADSHIP** How, then, is a man to do this humanly impossible task of loving his wife and putting her before himself? God always equips us to do what He commands us to do. Back to Robertson McQuilkin. "How do you do it? What are your resources?" asked the host on the TV show *Day of Discovery*. I hadn't thought about it, but since then I have. Praise helps. Right now, I think my life must be happier than 95% of the people on planet earth. Muriel's a joy to me, and life is good to both of us, in different ways. But I'm thinking of something more basic than "counting your blessings." By 1992, the blows of life had left me numb – my dearest slipping from me, my eldest son snatched away in a tragic accident, my life's work abandoned at its peak. I didn't hold it against God, but my faith could better be described as resignation. The joy had drained away, the passion in my love for God has frozen over. I was in trouble... Of course, the passion of Christ's love for me had never cooled. Even in my darkest hours when I felt my grip slipping and was in danger of sliding into the abyss of doubt, what always caught and held me was the vision of God's best loved, pinioned in my place... Then I remembered the secret I had learned in younger days – going to a mountain hideaway to be alone with God. There, though it was slow in coming, I was able to break free from preoccupation with my troubles and concentrate on Jesus. When that happened, I relearned what God had taught me more than once before: the heavy heart lifts on wings of praise."

So how can we have that same sacrificial attitude to our wives and families?

**A close personal relationship with God.** Quite obviously no one can continually and genuinely put others first unless they have God's supernatural power within to do so. Thus salvation is the first necessity. Then it is essential to be living in God's strength each day. Private and family devotions, Bible study, Scripture memorization, a growing personal intimacy, close involvement with a Body of believers and continual confession of sins is necessary.

**A commitment to show sacrificial love.** To sacrifice for another means we must first sacrifice our own desires and selfishness. As Romans 12:1-2 explains, it is first a mental decision to make and commit to, then it becomes a day-by-day, even moment-by-moment recommitment to stay with it. As long as physical withdrawal (divorce) or even just emotional withdrawal is an option to you, you won't make a 100% commitment to serve your mate. It has to be something you decide to do. A hospital visitor saw a nurse tending the sores of a leprosy patient and said, "I'd never do that for a million dollars!" The nurse answered, "Neither would I. But I do it for Jesus for nothing." If you can't do it for your mate, or for yourself, you can certainly do it for Jesus!

**Filled with the fruit of the Spirit.** No matter how committed you may be, that alone isn't enough. It's not our commitment that does it, but it's our commitment that allows God's Holy Spirit to work through us to do this (Galatians 5:22-24). If we just pretend love, force ourselves to act like we are patient, or withhold negative comments, we can only do that for so long. We as men simply can't do this on our own. To be like Jesus and do what Jesus would do, we need His strength. We need Jesus in us by the Holy Spirit in order to really think and act like Jesus. He will produce His fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22-23) through us when we allow Him to do so.



**Follow Jesus' example** "Whoever wants to become great must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave –JUST AS the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:26-28) He is our example, the One we are to emulate. "A student is not above his teacher, not a servant above his master." (Matthew 10:24-25). He told us He was setting the example for us when He washed the disciples' feet and told them to do likewise (John 13:1-17). Men, to be like Jesus means you must 'wash your wife's feet' regularly. It's different for each one of us, and it doesn't appeal to the flesh, but it's what it means to be like Jesus. Think of yourself as washing Jesus' feet by doing that act of kindness for your wife. He'll bless you for it, even if your wife doesn't.

So, men, how are you doing as a servant leader? Where does God want you to improve? What can you do to start?

Chicago Bears Hall-of-Fame Middle Linebacker Mike Singletary says: "The first thing in my life by far and the reason I do everything is my love for Jesus Christ. Number two is my family—being there for them and making sure I'm not missing time that I can't get back. Number three is my work. I don't care where I'm at or what I'm doing, the thing I want to do now in my life is make a difference and serve with a capital S. Serve in my home. Serve in my relationship with my wife. And serve my fellow man.... For me, it's a matter of "What am I doing to make a difference? What am I doing except making money." There are a lot of people out there who are hurting." And it all starts with serving our wives. Serving with a capital S. It's what God wants us. It's what our wives need. It's what makes us like Jesus. Serve. Serve. Serve.



**APPLICATION QUESTIONS.** The following are for you to talk about with your mate or contemplate on your own.

Men: What part of servant headship that was talked about is the hardest for you personally? Why?

Men: What have you found that helps you to be more the husband God wants you to be?

Women: What can you do to help your husband be the servant leader God wants him to be?

Think of your marriage as the gear shift in your car: **R – N – 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup>**

Using the analogy, where is your marriage now? Reverse? Neut? 1<sup>st</sup>? 2<sup>nd</sup>? 3<sup>rd</sup>? 4<sup>th</sup>? 5<sup>th</sup>?

Where was your marriage this time last year?

What can you do to help move it up a gear?

What five personal qualities about your mate do you most appreciate?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



List 3 things you would change about yourself if you could?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



# MATE SERVICE



## 2. Sacrificial Wife

An admirer once asked the famous orchestra conductor Leonard Bernstein what was the most difficult instrument to play. He responded with quick wit: "Second fiddle. I can get plenty of first violinists, but to find one who plays second violin with as much enthusiasm or second French horn or second flute, now that's a problem. And yet if no one plays second, we have no harmony."

Today no one wants to play second fiddle, or second anything! The focus is on independence, self-fulfillment and self-gratification. Humility is 'out' and pride in 'in.' Humility is no longer a virtue, now it's often seen as a defect. Pride in our possessions, our position and our self is in. We take great pride in the labels on our clothing, the letters after our names and the logo on our car.

Yet if we are to be a servant, this is not the way we are to be. A servant doesn't need and doesn't live for pre-eminence, prosperity, position, promotion or popularity. A servant doesn't always have to be right, first, recognized, praised, regarded or rewarded.

God commands all of us to be servants (Matthew 20:24-28) of God and each other. He commands husbands to be servant leaders of their families. He commands wives to be submissive servants to their husbands.

***Eph 5:21-6:1 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church- 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery-but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.***

This passage clearly outlines the wife's role as submissive servant. But what exactly does this mean?

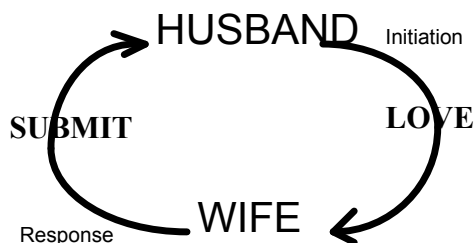
## I. REQUIREMENTS OF SERVANT SUBMISSION

**Servant submission means responding to your husband's love.** The Greek word “submit” is actually a military term which means to respond to authority. A woman is a responder, and this word recognizes that. ***“Wives, RESPOND to your own husband as unto the Lord!”*** In the Greek it is in the present tense meaning it must be done continually. It is an imperative, meaning it is a command. Finally it is in the middle voice, meaning the woman is benefited by doing this. Submitting/responding isn't just done for the man's sake, so he can fulfill his God-given responsibility of guiding and providing, it is also done for the woman's sake. She benefits by her submission, for that is God's provision and protection for her. When she is in her proper God-given place she benefits greatly. Perhaps that's why Satan attacks this so greatly today.

Now by saying that a woman is a responder, we are assuming there is the proper person in her life for her to respond to. If a woman is to respond, then the man is to initiate, to bring out that response in her. As the chart below shows, men are created with a God-given desire to provide and guide their families, that's why women are commanded to submit/respond to them, so they can carry meet this inner need. Women, on the other hand, need love and security, which is why men are commanded to sacrificially love their wives as Christ loves them.

	MAN	WOMAN
NEED	PROVIDE, GUIDE	SECURITY, LOVE
DUTY	SACRIFICIAL LOVE	SUBMIT, RESPECT

Yes, a woman is a responder. Men, do you want your wife to treat you like a king? Then treat her like a queen! Man must initiate this response. He must take the lead in showing his wife love and security. Then she will better be able to respond in submission.



Please do not understand me to say that if a wife doesn't properly submit/respond and respect her husband that it is all a husband's fault. No, the woman is responsible to do this as unto the Lord, even if the husband is far from perfect in treating her like Jesus does. Along the same lines, though, men often don't realize just when and how much a wife often is submitting. We men just don't realize that and they often don't get the credit they deserve. It isn't natural for a woman to submit, nor it is easy. The world's example without and the sin nature within combine to make it very difficult for most women to trust a man to that extent.

Still, our pattern is Jesus. The husband is to love the wife sacrificially and put her first, as Jesus does for us. His motive for all he does is to be his love for her. Christians are not to presume on Jesus' love nor take advantage of it, but love and serve Him because of it. The same is true of wives to their husbands.

So first of all we see that servant submission is responding to a husband's love with an attitude of respect and trust, letting him provide for and guide the family.

**Servant submission is an attitude and an act.** True Biblical submission that pleases the Lord starts with an inner attitude of respect for her husband as a man seeking to follow God's will to the best of his ability (Eph 5:33) and shows itself in outer actions (1 Peter 3:6) that allow him to lead as a servant leader.

**Servant submission shows respect and honor.** An old commercial for car wax depicts a young woman preparing to sell her car. Aged and dull, the vehicle that she has used for years holds no more allure for her. Yet when she uses the 'miracle' wax to put shine back on the vehicle's finish, the new glow revives the woman's old affection for her car. She throws away the "For Sale" sign, and drives away, happy again in a car she treasures anew. Women, try the 'miracle wax' of respect and honor on your husband and you'll see him in a new light – like you did before you married him. You respected him then, respect him now. God commands it (Eph 5:33) and your husband needs it to feel good about himself as a man. Why do you think men always show off for their women? They need your respect and admiration!

***"The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit." Prov 18:21*** That certainly applies to a woman's tongue after marriage. She can bring life or death to her husband and marriage by how she responds to him verbally. ***"Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife." Prov 25:24***

Just how does a woman show respect and honor to her husband? You do this when you come to him for advice, when you praise him or thank him, when you brag on him to others (especially in his hearing) and when you practice the Golden Rule in response to his mistakes and failures.

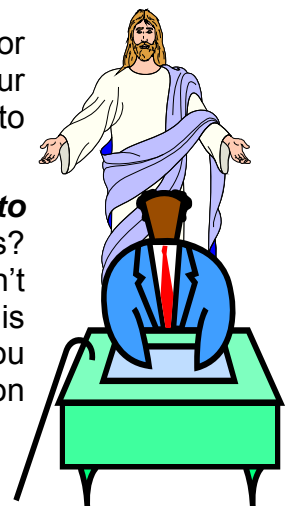
You don't show him respect because he is perfect, nor withhold it because he is so very imperfect. You show respect because he is God's chosen vessel to use in your life. God has provided you with a pastor you are to respect. There are policemen and others who fill roles that benefit you, and you respect him for it. Your husband is placed in your life by God as God's chosen undershepherd over you and your children. He is Jesus' stand-in in your life. Respect him for his position, not his perfection.

Men desperately need encouragement from their women. We get beat up in the world and most of us carry emotional scars from our childhood. We don't need someone pointing out our faults – we know them better than you do! We need someone to come alongside us and help us, to love us unconditionally. We need a cheerleader to keep us going. If you, our wives, aren't doing the job, that leaves the door wide open for someone else to come meet that need. For many men it's pornography – a responsive woman who needs him and doesn't criticize or nag but just wants to please him. That's why the emotional appeal of pornography is so much stronger than the physical appeal.

Another thing, women – don't compare him to others. You don't like when he does that with you, don't do it with him. Don't focus on his weakness. ***"whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things" (Phil 4:8)*** Does this describe your thoughts about your husband?

Never act like his mother. You won't be showing him respect and honor if you treat him in such a way. Don't scold, nag or criticize. You can have your say once, if you speak the truth in love, then don't repeat it but leave it up to God to work in him.

**Servant submission is really to Jesus.** Paul says ***"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord." (Eph 5:21)*** How do you respond to Jesus? Do you respond to your husbands the same way? "Oh", you say, "but he isn't anything like Jesus!" Probably not, but that means your submission is conditional. Do you want his love for you to be conditional on what you deserve? When you think of your submission to him as really being submission to Jesus it should be a lot easier to accomplish.



An executive secretary once said, "When I began to envision Jesus standing behind my boss, my work changed. I had to do my very best. Even the menial task of serving coffee became a joy, and my attitude changed from arrogance to respect." It's easier to serve your mate if you envision your loving Lord rather than your flawed spouse. Picture doing it for Jesus. The imposition then becomes an honor.

If you submit in this way it'll be a privilege for you. If you don't it'll be forced slavery. The choice is up to your attitude to it. If you say to God, "How can I show You my love and devotion?" He'll say "By submitting to your husband."

**Servant submission includes all areas of life.** *"Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in EVERYTHING." Eph 5:24*

First let me assure you that this doesn't refer to areas of obvious sin. Nor does it mean a wife must stay in a state of real abuse (I Cor 7). There are numerous Biblical principles and precedents for that.

However the word 'everything' is very strong and all-encompassing. It doesn't allow for a woman to choose what she will and what she won't submit in. Many women can submit in most areas, but there are always some areas that are very hard. Often this comes from having a bad experience in the past in trusting a male figure who hurt them. Other times this comes from a rebellion in their own flesh (sin nature). 'Everything' means 'everything.' It doesn't mean just things that come easy for you, or areas where your husband seems competent and right. 'Everything' means EVERY THING.



**Servant submission means giving up control.** *Gen 3:16 To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."* Too often women unknowingly look for a man they can control and marry him. This is the pattern they saw in their mother and father. Also past disappointments in relationships with men when young, including their own father, teach them that men aren't to be trusted. But when they control their husband, they lose

respect for him. Often it is more the wife's inability to trust her husband than his weakness that causes her to resist submitting.

The Bible makes this principle clear over and over. Man is to be the head of the woman (I Corinthians 11:2-16). Women are to be silent in church and let the men lead (I Corinthians 14:34-35). Because Eve exercised control over Adam, women are not to be in authority over men (I Timothy 2:13-14).

Mary is a great example of this. She submitted to her husband's headship when he woke her in the middle of the night, the day after the wise men visited and told her they were immediately leaving for Egypt. Then they returned to hostile Nazareth instead of friendly Bethlehem at his word. She trusted him because he earned her trust by putting her before himself when she was pregnant before they got married. He had decided to divorce her quietly instead of publicly humiliating her, even though it seemed she had wronged him. She never forgot that. However, a woman is still to submit even if her husband doesn't put her first. God will be her protector and defender, not her herself.

**Servant submission is unconditional.** Real love means loving your husband for who he is, not who you want him to be. It's the Golden Rule, loving him as you want him to love you. You don't have to like everything about him, but you must love him. You are never commanded to like all he does, but you are commanded to love him. This love isn't something you can

pretend, talk yourself into, or just whip up when you need it. It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, the first mentioned fruit (Galatians 5:23).



God strictly warns against withholding love from ones mate, including sexual love (I Corinthians 7: 4-5). Being a servant means putting your mate's needs before your own. If you don't do this with your husband, if you withhold in any way, you are leaving him vulnerable for some other woman to inadvertently come along and meet those needs. That's how most 'affairs' begin.

**Servant submission allows him to lead.** A man's number one need is to be needed by his wife and children. "I need you" goes right to the depth of a man's soul. He'll do anything for a woman who needs him. If you treat him like a critical, nagging mother he may do what you say to get you off his back, but you won't get his heart. Allow him to lead by drawing back and letting him grow to fill the role. Don't prompt him or try to pull his strings. Don't pick up the pieces unless he asks you to. Do this out of love for him and for God.

**Servant submission develops an inner beauty.** The world today focuses on youth, appearance, build, etc. This was probably very important to you and him when you married. Now your appearance has changed. You have aged and grown larger. Things have changed shape. Men can often overlook this more in their wives than they can in themselves. Yet the Bible says it's the inner things that matter most (I Peter 3:1-4). Husbands discover this as they age. Being submissive to your husbands means developing your inner beauty and maturity, your character and personality. If all you care about is your appearance you will be quite shallow and not at all what he really wants and needs.

A good rule of thumb is this: when someone first meets you do they remember you for your appearance or for you as a person? Which most affects them: how you look or your gracious manner?

Having looked at the requirements of servant submission, lets now look at the reasons to be this way:

## **II. REASONS FOR SERVANT SUBMISSION**

There are two good reasons for women to be submissive servants: God commands it and blesses them for it.

**Obedience to God** is the first reason to be a submissive servant. ***Phil 2:2-8 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death- even death on a cross!***

Jesus wrapped a towel around His waist and washed the feet of His disciples, even though they didn't deserve it. He set an example for us to follow as servants.

**Blessing from God** is the other reason to be a submissive servant. God blesses in many ways. He blesses the woman by using her submission to change her husband (I Peter 3:1-6). He uses it to bring a closer union between husband and wife (Ephesians 5:31). It causes them to work together instead of competing with each other, like mountain climbers work together.

By submitting to her husband a woman ‘fills up his empty spaces’ (Genesis 2:18). Elizabeth Elliot writes: “The first woman, Eve, was made specifically for the first man, a helper, to meet, respond to, surrender to, and complement him. God made her FROM the man, out of his very bone, and then he brought her TO the man. When Adam named Eve, he accepted responsibility to “husband” her – to provide for her, to cherish her, to protect her. These two people together represent the image of God – one of them in a special way the initiator, the other the responder. Neither the one nor the other was adequate alone to bear the divine image.”

If this fills a man’s empty spaces, then what fills a woman’s empty spaces? Her submission to her husband fills her spaces as well as his. Don’t try to fill your own with romance stories, children, career, possessions, etc. Focus on filling up your husband and your own needs will be met directly or indirectly, by your husband or by God.

Now that we’ve seen the requirements of servant submission as well as reasons for it, let’s look at how to be able to be a servant.

### **III. RESOURCES FOR SERVANT SUBMISSION**

**A close personal relationship with God** is the first resource. Salvation and a commitment to live for Him each day is essential. Wives must first and foremost depend on their heavenly Husband and develop their relationship with Him. Without His help there is no way they will be able to show a submissive spirit.

**Commitment to show submission** is the next step. Make a decision to be his servant no matter what. Remember that servanthood isn’t always rewarded. Don’t assume he will notice or appreciate your actions. Don’t assume he will instantly change and treat you differently. If you start being a servant because of what you will get out of it you are all wrong. That motive won’t work at all. Your rewards will be in heaven. Anything on this earth is just extra, if it happens. Take a moment now to make sure your motives are pure, meaning you are doing it out of love and service to God and not for anything you may expect to receive back because of it. Jesus is our example in this as well.



**Filled with fruit of the Spirit Gal 5:22-24 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.** As I already said, no human being can produce the kind of love that brings sacrifice for another out of their own flesh. It is only as God’s Spirit fills us that we can love as He loves. It’s impossible to do without His help. Make sure you ask to be filled with the fruit of His Spirit every morning. List them, emphasizing the ones you especially lack.

Anita Bryant in “Bless This House” says, “Only as I practice yielding to Jesus can I learn to submit, as the Bible instructs me, to the loving leadership of my husband. Only the power of Christ can enable a woman like me to become submissive in the Lord.”

**Follow Jesus’ example** is the final key to being a submissive servant. In each situation ask yourself what Jesus would do (WWJD) – and then do just that very thing!

Pray for your husband instead of criticizing. That’s what Jesus does. This is all new and unnatural to him, too. He probably didn’t have the role model he needed in this either. Also pray for yourself. As Jesus says, you must take the plank out of your own eye before you can remove the speck from his (Matthew 7:5).



Following Jesus' example, too, means going to God with your unmet needs as Jesus did. Don't go to any other false substitute (friends, romance stories, children, etc). Talk to your husband about your unmet needs. Do it in a way to educate him in love, not that he feels criticized or a failure. You shoot yourself in the foot when you do that.

You won't find many talk shows or TV programs that will help you learn how to be a submissive servant, but it is God's way and the right way. It isn't an easy way, but is the only way. Alone you can't do it, but with Jesus as your example and help remember that all things are possible.

A happy couple had always raised cucumbers and made sweet pickles together. The husband just loved to watch things grow. Thus he spent his winters studying the seed catalogues to get the best possible cucumbers. The whole family enjoyed preparing the soil, planting and caring for the plants. He would often go out and just enjoy the way they grew. His wife loved to make sweet pickles. She studied the best recipes and the best methods of preparing and preserving them. They were such a happy family, and all their visitors went home with a jar of their famous pickles. The church always had a good supply of their pickles as well. People marveled at this family that had found a project to do together.

Finally, the man died. The next spring all the children returned home. They said to their mother, "We know how much you love making pickles, so we are going to prepare the garden and plant them for you." The mother smiled and said, "Thanks a lot children, but you don't have to do any planting for I really don't enjoy pickle making. I only did that because your father loved to grow the cucumbers so much." The children were all amazed, but the youngest son was upset, because the father had pulled him aside not too long before and shared with him that he really didn't like growing cucumbers, but only did it to please the mother!

This story may not be a good example of communication, but it does show the loving benefits of being a servant to one's mate. Wouldn't it be great to have a marriage like that? You can. Just be a servant.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS.** The following are for you to talk about with your mate or contemplate on your own.

Women: What part or requirement of servant submission is hardest for you? Why?

Women: What have you found that helps you be more the wife God wants you to be?

Men: What can you do to help your wife be more of a submissive servant?

Does all you do support your mate so they can be a better servant to you? What do you do that makes it hard for them to serve you?

Do you pray for your mate daily?

Would you say that you really listen to your mate? That you understand them?

When you have sex with your mate, what can you do to focus more on their needs instead of your own?

Do you praise your mate regularly?

Are you quick and sincere in your apologies?



# MATE SERVICE



## 3. Sacrificial Marriage

Marriages are in trouble today! The divorce rate today is about 50%, and the rate for Christians is slightly higher than among those who aren't Christians. Studies show that 40% of all marriages will be touched in some way by infidelity before the people reach 40. "I never thought it would happen to me" is heard over and over.

The good news is that it doesn't have to be that way. The Bible gives us God's perfect prevention for this. It's found in Proverbs 24:30-34.

**Prov 24:30-34**

***30 I went past the field of the sluggard,  
past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment;***

***31 thorns had come up everywhere,  
the ground was covered with weeds,  
and the stone wall was in ruins.***

***32 I applied my heart to what I observed  
and learned a lesson from what I saw:***

***33 A little sleep, a little slumber,  
a little folding of the hands to rest--***

***34 and poverty will come on you like a bandit  
and scarcity like an armed man.***



The writer of Proverbs here uses a garden analogy to explain life lessons that can be accurately applied to the family. A relationship, like a garden, needs care and attention to survive. Neglect allows weeds to take over and destroy the good productivity. First, let's look at the cause of weeds growing.

### I. THE CAUSE

The cause of the weeds in this garden is simply neglect of routine maintenance. There is no gross immoral evil going on. The owner is actually a nice, easy-going guy. He means no harm. ***"A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest-- and poverty will come on you like a bandit."*** It wasn't even a LOT of sleep and slumber, just a LITTLE. He was just a little slow in getting to things that needed doing. He was too lazy to keep up with routine maintenance. He put off the work until the next day. He'd do it, just a little later. He had no desire to destroy his garden, he just didn't feel like doing the required labors right then.





The lesson is clear. A little neglect brings a whole lot of ruin. As I counsel couples going through marriage difficulties I find that there seldom is one sin that caused the problems. It always seems to go back to a slow drifting from the 'little' things they did together before marriage or the point where they find themselves. Doing nice things with and for each other gets neglected, put off until another time. Maintenance work on a relationship is neglected because we are so busy with other things that seem more important. Or we have been hurt by our mate (knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally) and we withdraw. A little neglect in a relationship also brings a whole lot of ruin.

## **II. THE RESULT**

The result of this neglect is complete ruin with no hope of recovery. It is too late. Weeds have taken over and choked out the good productive plants. The weeds of self-centeredness, anger, fear, criticalness, withdrawal, and so forth soon kill the tender and productive shoots of love and care that have started growing. You've seen it happen in other relationships. You may even be able to see it happening in your relationship.

Notice, too, the walls of this garden fell down in places. The wall was the boundary marker and served to keep animals of destruction out. The walls didn't come down all at once, just slowly, stone by stone, here a little and there a little. "What does one stone matter?" the gardener can ask. But then there is a another stone and soon still another. The same, too, in our relationship.

When we don't meet out mate's needs, we leave the walls down for them to be vulnerable to someone who can wander by and meet that need. We lose the protection around our hearts and families through neglect.

"What does one little stone matter?" A whole lot!

**III. THE WARNING** The clear warning here is to watch our putting off basic maintenance of our marriage. Procrastination leads to devastation. It doesn't take sinful behavior to spoil our marriage garden, simple neglect will do just fine. This includes things like not giving a hug and kiss when leaving the house and not saying things like "Thank you," and "I love you." It may be being too distracted to talk or listen, or too busy to have devotions and pray together. Not taking regular alone time together to go on dates and really connect again is certainly neglecting basic necessary marriage maintenance. Think of the special little things you did before marriage and right after. You never imagined you'd stop those things. You thought they would grow. Now they've stopped and your garden is full of weeds. Get back to those things at all costs or it will be too late!



## **IV. THE PREVENTION**

From long-time gardeners with prize-winning gardens we can glean principles that can help us prevent weeds from taking over and causing destruction.

**Keep a close watch on the garden.** Good maintenance results in great blessing. Attentiveness is the key. Marriages need to be watched and attended like a prized possession. Your relationship needs to be monitored for small cracks in the walls and little weeds sticking up their heads. At once action must be taken to remove them and strengthen the marriage. Marriages, like gardens, don't go to seed overnight, but they do go to seed when neglected.

Keeping the communication lines open is an important part of this as well. Neglect will cause hurt that will break down real communication. Then people start assuming things, usually wrong things, and the weeds really grow.

**Fertilize what you want to grow.** Plants need food to grow. So do marriage relationships. Appreciation is a good marriage fertilizer, especially when used in liberal amounts. Fertilize your mate's strengths both verbally to them and also in your own mind. Starve (ignore) their weaknesses and pretty soon they will fade.



Another good fertilizer is doing acts of kindness. Know your mate's love language: words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service and physical touch. Speak their language often, even if it isn't your language (it probably won't be). Initiate, don't wait to be asked. Take on the role of a servant and you'll help your relationship grow.

**Watch out for weeds.** You don't have to try to grow weeds, they'll grow all by themselves. You have to work to grow something productive. All you have to do to grow weeds is nothing – neglect. When weeds do pop up they must be removed quickly or the roots will get a strong foothold (Eph 4:26). Weeds start small and grow – like resentment, jealousy, hurt, feeling unappreciated, etc.

Weeds always start below the surface and aren't immediately visible until they grow. Hurt starts inside, and if not handled right will grow into a very nasty weed resistant to anything we can do to remove it. It takes skill to tell a weed from a plant when they are both very small. Learn to recognize the difference in your marriage. Don't hesitate to ask others for wisdom: friends, pastor or God.

One of the things that makes weeds so hard to get rid of is that they seem to appeal to our flesh, something we want to hang onto and not give up. Lust, fantasies, flirting, self-centeredness and the like fit this category very well.

Weeds are very 'invasive' – they aren't content to stay where they start but insist on spreading and taking over every area of space. Anger is that way. By the end of the day a small anger grows to be all-consuming. That's true of lust, bitterness, discontent, and other sins as well. Watch them. Weeds aren't content until they choke out everything good and productive. They keep the good plants from receiving light and nutrients and so they will fade and die.



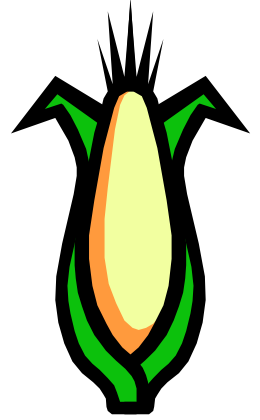
**Keep your walls in good repair.** Walls protect gardens from predators who will destroy them. Build strong walls of love, servant-hood, spending time alone, praying together, laughing, meeting each other's emotional needs, and putting the other first. These strong walls will protect your marriage and you as well. Neither of you will be as open to temptation. Outside predators won't be able to get in and destroy your marriage.

We've seen the cause, the result, the warning and the prevention of damage to our garden/marriage. Finally lets see the good fruit that comes from a garden well attended.

## V. THE FRUIT

The reward of hard work in a garden is fruit (and vegetables) to enjoy when winter and hard times come. Make your marriage strong now so that as time goes on and hard times come you can coast on the good produce you have stored away for it. Build it solid now and it will produce for many years to come. It will carry you through problems with children and finances, illness and career problems, and it will carry you through your elderly years in close friendship and love.

Remember, though, good gardens don't just happen – they take work. ***“A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest-- and poverty will come on you like a bandit.”***



# **SACRIFICIAL GARDENING**

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS.** The following are for you to talk about with your mate or contemplate on your own.

What parallels do you see between your relationship and a garden?

Who is the main ‘gardener’ in your relationship, the one who works hardest to keep the weeds out and things growing? If it isn’t you, then thank your mate for doing that.

Give some examples of weeds that can destroy a relationship.

What weeds do you see that were present in your parent’s relationship?

What weeds have you been battling in your marriage?

What is the biggest problem in communication in your marriage? What can you do to improve things?

What walls do you have to protect you marriage?

What other walls do you need to have to improve your marriage?

What are some of the hard decisions you re going to have to make and stick to in order to have time to devote to your garden/marriage?

# MATE SERVICE

## 4. Sacrificial Love



In the movie *The Poseidon Adventure*, the ocean liner *S. S. Poseidon* is on the open sea when it hits a huge storm. A wall of water crashes through the ballroom chandelier. Men in tuxes and women in evening gowns scream and run. Lights go out, smoke pours into rooms and, amid all the confusion, the ship flips over. Because of the air trapped inside the ocean liner, it floats upside down. But in the confusion, the passengers can't figure out what's going on. They scramble to get out, mostly by climbing the steps to the top deck. The problem is, the top deck is now 100 feet under water. In trying to get to the top of the ship, they drown. The only survivors are the few who do what doesn't make sense. They do the opposite of what everyone else is doing and descend into the dark belly of the ship until they reach the hull. By going down, they reach the ocean's surface. Rescuers hear them banging and cut them free. In marriage, it's as if God has turned the ship over and the only way for us to find freedom is to choose what doesn't make sense: lay down our lives by serving, supporting, and sacrificing for our spouses.

Servanthood is both an act and an attitude. You can't have one without the other and really be a servant. Jesus has both and we are to be like Him. He came to serve us because He LOVED us. That was His motive in all He did and still does – love for us. The flesh says look out for yourself and have others serve you, but Jesus gives us a way that seems upside down – love and serve others. This whole concept is expanded and explained by Paul in I Corinthians 13.

***1 Cor 13 1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.***

***4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.***

***8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.***

***13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.***

## I. LOVE IS NECESSARY

**Ultimate communication without love is worthless. 1 Cor 13:1 *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.***

"If I speak" refers to communication, which is key to a growing relationship. Yet even the very best marriage communication skills without love are nothing. Without love the best skills and techniques are like a cymbal or gong – loud but hollow and empty. Without love there is nothing worthwhile to say. However true they may be, words without love bring hurt and harm. Words must be motivated by love. That is what real servanthood is all about.



'Love' here is the Geek word *agape*, referring to God's unconditional love. It isn't our pitiful conditional love "if" or "because of." It's like God's "in spite of" love. This love only comes from God, the fruit of His Spirit working in us.

**Ultimate knowledge without love is useless. 2 *If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.***

It takes great wisdom to understand the opposite sex and how to meet their needs. Yet, even if one has all knowledge of how to be the perfect husband or wife yet doesn't have God's sacrificial love that causes us to put our mate first, we have nothing.

**Ultimate sacrifice without love still disappoints. 3 *If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.*** Ultimate sacrifice, even being the ultimate servant externally, if done without love as the motive, amounts to nothing. Knowing all about your mate's love language and doing all the right things means nothing if not done with a loving heart.

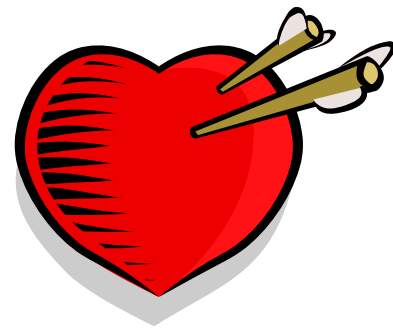
How can sacrifice without love fail? It fails because it's done in our own strength and for selfish and self-centered motives. Someone put it this way: Though I speak of my love with all the poetry of Elizabeth Barrett or Robert Browning and sprinkle my daily conversations with "Darling," "Sweetheart," "Honey," and "I love you," but have not *agape* for my spouse, I'm just making a lot of meaningless noise. And though I read all the how to have a good marriage books I can, and attend numerous marriage congresses, conferences, seminars, enrichments and encounters; and though I have the Ph.D. in marriage and family counseling so that I can help other couples toward wedded bliss, but have not *agape* for my mate, I am nothing as a partner. And though I dutifully perform my marital responsibilities as my culture, my church and my conscience dictate even to the point of being fatigued, ruining my health or dying in the process, but have not *agape* for my partner, all these grand actions don't amount to a wad of chewed gum.

What makes the perfect mate? Is it great communication? Is it genius IQ so as to understand all about our mate? It is doing sacrificial acts because that's what we're supposed to do? No, all these without love fail. Since love is so important we better understand what it is.



## II. WHAT LOVE IS

**Love is patient** Love waits with contentment, without demanding a change, without anxiety and anger. Love means being patient with your mate's faults and weaknesses without trying to change them, without nagging or criticizing. Sam Levison once said, "Love at first sight is nothing special. It's when two people have been looking at each other for years that it becomes a miracle."



**Love is kind** The Greek literally means that love is "easy" on the other person. This comes from a servant heart dedicated to the Lord and filled with His love. Patience without kindness can be cold, distant and hard. Love is kind. It sees a need in your mate and meets it. It means taking the initiative to help wherever needed. It doesn't matter how large or small the act, for it is the heart motive God sees. Brother Lawrence says "We ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, Who regards not the greatness of the work but the love with which it is performed." A godly marriage is full of random acts of kindness done swiftly and unexpectedly.

**Love does not envy** It is not jealous. It means I do not desire what I cannot or do not have. I do not compare my mate to others and wish they were different in some way. Jealousy is self-centered. Love looks through a telescope, envy through a microscope. Love does not complain and blame God for not giving you a better mate. Love trusts God and is content with what He has given. Love does not seek to control our mate but grants them freedom to be themselves.

**Love does not boast** Boasting is done to impress, to win points. It seldom accomplishes this, however. Boasting is self-centered. Servant love is the opposite. Arrogance may win a battle in marriage, but it won't improve the marriage or the situation. If you must correct your mate do it after much prayer and humbling on one's self. Do it privately, gently, and in love – as you would want them to correct you. Instead brag on your mate publicly, praise them in private and before others. Make sure it is genuine and you mean it.

**Love is not proud** Pride is the attitude behind the boaster. It comes from an over-inflated sense of one's own importance. It demands to be the center of attention. Love, however, stays humble and inflates others instead of self. Arrogance smothers love, humility overflows with love. Humility admits its faults and doesn't have to win the argument or prove ones self right. Humility is an act of submission, following the example of Jesus. Humility builds your mate up, not yourself. ***Phil 2:3-11 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.***

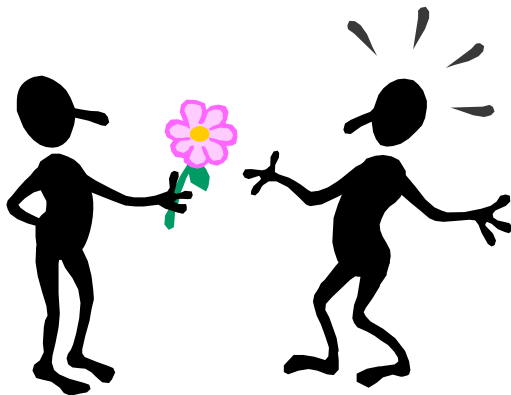
**Love is not rude** Love has good manners. It says "Thank You," "Please," and "I'm sorry." Love means treating your mate as politely as you treat others. Before marriage we treat our mate better than others but somehow after we are married awhile we find ourselves being short, rude, inconsiderate and impatient.



**Love is not self-seeking** Love does not seek to further its own profit or advantage. Love is not selfish. Love is a servant. A servant is not self-seeking. This means more than just sitting back and letting others go first. It means lifting others up, escorting them to the front of the line. This is a good summary of all the other descriptions of love. A true servant has only one agenda: the Master's agenda. Think about it: if both husband and wife put the other first, seek to meet their mate's needs and not their own, then things will be as God intended. If the husband meets the wife's needs and she his, then their needs will be better met than if they tried to meet their own.

**Love is not easily angered** Love doesn't let another's words or actions arouse anger (which comes from pride, self-centeredness). Love has a slow fuse. In many marriages one mate will use anger as a control factor, a way of manipulating and getting what they want. What a terrible tool this is, and what an awful example for one's children. This doesn't mean there is no place for righteous indignation in marriage. Sometimes some very hurtful and wrong things are done. Even then, though, anger must be controlled and handled in a godly way. (See my articles on *Anger Control* for more information about anger.)

**Love keeps no record of wrongs** Instead of being easily angered, love keeps no record of wrongs. It doesn't keep a mental list of hurts or failures. This results in bitterness and bondage. Instead show mercy, as God shows you. We are too concerned with getting justice, when what God gives us is not justice but mercy. Forgiveness means not giving another what they deserve – that's what God does for us when He forgives us. It is a mental choice to give



up our right for revenge. It means not punishing the other by words or actions, not withholding love or sex. In his book, *Lee: The Last Years*, Charles Bracelen Flood reports that after the Civil War, Robert E. Lee visited a Kentucky lady who took him to the remains of a grand old tree in front of her house. There she bitterly cried that its limbs and trunk had been destroyed by Federal Artillery fire. She looked to Lee for a word condemning the North or at least sympathizing with her loss. After a brief silence, Lee said, "Cut it down, my dear Madam, and forget it." It is better to forgive the injustices of the past than to allow them to remain, let

bitterness take root and poison the rest of our life (Eph 4:26). How would you feel if your knew your mate automatically and totally forgave everything you did to hurt them? You can't control what they do, but you can decide to be that way yourself.

No one ever said it better than C. S. Lewis: "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket -- safe, dark, motionless, airless -- it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.... The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers of love... is Hell."

**Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth** Love makes you genuinely GLAD for the other one when they prosper and hurt when they hurt. Love isn't secretly glad when ones mate learns something the hard way. Love never uses deception to gain the upper hand. Love is always truthful. Lying and deceiving can become such a habit we aren't always aware we are doing it. Love never deals in deception, it traffics in truth. Love tells the truth

even when it hurts. Love tells the truth especially when it hurts. Love shares inner feelings and hurts. Love tells the truth in love. Love builds up, it doesn't tear down. Deception prevents total intimacy in marriage. It takes wisdom to know when your mate needs love that is patient or love that speaks the truth. Ask God for that wisdom.

**Love always protects** Love bears up under adverse circumstances for the welfare of others. Love hangs tough. Love tolerates imperfection and accepts personal differences. When life or marriage throws unexpected or irritating things our way, love can handle it. Love doesn't cut and run when things get tough. When a person in marriage has an attitude of "what's in it for me?" or "what do I get out of it?" that marriage won't meet its God-given potential. Servant love tries to protect your mate, not yourself.

**Love always trusts** Love 'believes all things.' Love complements, encourages and helps others do difficult things. Love doesn't question the ability of your mate to do something God wants them to do but supports them in it. Love communicates confidence. Love is in the construction business – building others up. Your mate will become what you convince them they will be.

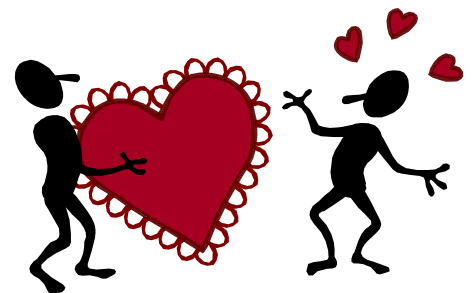
**Love always hopes** Hope knows where it is headed. 'Hope' in the Bible means 'confident assurance.' Love is optimistic, based on God's faithfulness. Love doesn't give up on a marriage or a mate. It always knows all things are possible for God. When someone quits or gives up, then nothing good can come to that relationship. Servant love never quits.

**Love always perseveres** This refers especially to tough times and difficult circumstances. Love is willing to suffer and persist through pain. When we love someone we go through suffering for their sake, to help them to take pain from them, to endure pain they cause, to stick with them. Love sticks even when the marriage isn't fun or fair.

**Love never fails** It 'never lets you down.' With love any marriage can grow. Without it nothing happens. This is God's promise to us if we let God fill us with His sacrificial servant love.

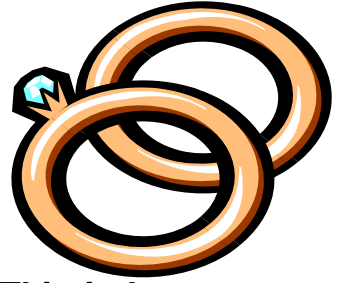
***But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.*** We can't see the overall picture of our life, mate or marriage – but God does. In heaven all these earthly difficulties will be gone. There'll be no more marriage hurts or problems. Then we will see it all in perfect perspective. Now we trust Him and obey Him by being a loving servant like Him.

Now that we've seen that love is necessary for a servant and what love is, let's look at how to have this kind of love in our hearts. This is the essence of being like Jesus.





### **III. HOW TO LOVE YOUR MATE**



**Love is of God, not man, so get connected.** 1 John 4:7-13 *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. 13 We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.*

**Love is rooted in God's person and character.** We can't counterfeit love, nor whip it up on our own. Agape love is God's unconditional love. Authors such as Dwight Small can speak eloquently about the application of agape love to marriage: "Agape is not born of a lover's need, nor does it have its source in the love object. Agape doesn't exist in order to get what it wants but empties itself to give what the other needs. Its motives rise wholly from within its own nature. Agape lives in order to die to self for the blessedness of caring for another, spending for another, spending itself for the sake of the beloved."

**Love is a reflection of God's presence.** When we aren't showing His love we aren't being like Him. When we stay close to Him we'll reflect what He is like – love! Love is the first fruit of the Spirit mentioned. D. L. Moody wrote: "The fruit of the Spirit begins with love. There are nine graces spoken of, and of these nine Paul puts love at the head of the list; love is the first thing, the first in that precious cluster of fruit. Someone has said that all the other eight can be put in terms of love. Joy is love exulting; peace is love in repose; longsuffering is love on trial; gentleness is love in society; goodness is love in action; faith is love on the battlefield; meekness is love at school; and temperance is love in training... If we only just brought forth the fruit of the Spirit, what a world we would have! Men would have no desire to do evil."

**Love is an act, not a feeling, so just do it.** 1 John 3:18 *Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.* You can't link love to feelings. 'Phileo' love is conditional love, how we 'feel' about someone. But God's love which He shows through us is unconditional agape love. In your marriage don't base things on your feelings. Chose to let God love your mate through you and start acting in loving ways. Then feelings of love may or may not follow. The decisions to love will result in feelings of love, don't let feelings of love, or lack of them, be the standard you use to measure love. That's the world's way, not God's way. For many years in various parts of the world marriages were arranged and these seemed to often work out better than our system of choosing whom we will marry based on how we 'feel' about them. That system has led to a high divorce rate, unfaithfulness in marriage and living together without marriage. When a marriage is based on how we feel for someone then it is on shaky ground, for feelings come and go.

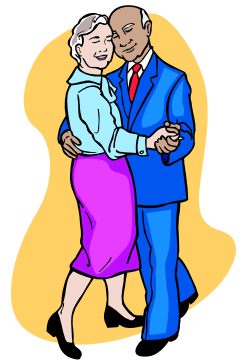
**Love is a gift, not a wage or bribe, so give it freely.** Luke 6:32-38 *"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. 35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything*

**back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. 37 "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."** This passage is often used to teach about financial giving, but the context is in discussion of the nature of love. Give freely and you'll get more back than you gave. If you just show love to your mate as a wage – because they earn or deserve it – then you are missing what agape love is really all about. If you show love to your mate as a **bribe** so they will love you and you will benefit from it then you are totally missing the whole point of being a loving servant.

**Love is an obligation, not an option, so pay it. Rom 13:8 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.** This is also used about finances but the context is really about love. Love is a debt, not an option. It is something we **MUST** give. **1 John 4:11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.** God doesn't love us because we love Him, we love Him because He first loved us. We must love our mates as well – it is a command, not an option.

**Love must grow, so nurture it. 1 Thess 3:11-12 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. 12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.** Love is dynamic, it can grow or fade. God's love never changes, for it is always 100%, but ours is far from that so it has room to increase or decrease.

Read and reread I Corinthians 13, Use it as your standard for love. Ask God to use it to teach you have to be a loving servant to your mate and family. Make godly servanthood motivated by agape love your life goal. That's the only way to be like Jesus!



**APPLICATION QUESTIONS.** The following are for you to talk about with your mate or contemplate on your own.

Is your love for your mate increasing or decreasing?

What can you do to have it increase more? What stands in the way? (you can't use your mate as an excuse, for that means your love is conditional on them)

Evaluate yourself (not your mate) in each category below. Where are you strongest? Where are you weakest? Which traits do you need to work on most? How can you improve?

Love is patient,

love is kind.

It does not envy,

it does not boast,

it is not proud.

It is not rude,  
it is not self-seeking,  
it is not easily angered,  
it keeps no record of wrongs.  
Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.  
It always protects,  
always trusts,  
always hopes,  
always perseveres.  
Love never fails.

Where is your mate strongest in showing love – which of those above best apply to them?

What 3 things can you start doing (or stop doing) to better show agape love to your mate?

**“May I  
Serve  
You?”**



Now that you have read this whole booklet, summarize what you feel God is telling you. What do you need to pray about daily? What do you need to start doing? To stop doing? Write out your plan of action so you can apply what you have read.

# MATE SERVICE

By Jerry Schmoyer

## **Biblical Servanthood: the key to a lifelong healthy marriage**

Two brothers decided to play on sand banks by the river's edge. Because the town depended on the river, it was regularly dredged and sand deposited in great mounds beside the river. Children loved playing on the huge sand piles, but they are very dangerous. The sand dries on the top with rigid crusts that conceal cavernous internal voids formed by the escaping water in the wet sand underneath. If a child climbs on a mound of sand that has such a hidden void, the external surface easily collapses into the cavern. Sand from higher on the mound then rushes into the void, trapping the child in a sinkhole of loose sand. This is exactly what happened to the two brothers as they raced up one of the larger mounds.

When the boys did not return home at dinnertime, family and neighbors organized a search. They found the younger brother. Only his head and shoulders protruded from the mound. He was unconscious from the pressure of sand on his body. The searchers began digging frantically. When they had cleared the sand to his waist, he roused to consciousness.

"Where is your brother?" the rescuers shouted.

"I'm standing on his shoulders," replied the child.

With the sacrifice of his own life, the older brother had lifted the younger to safety. So, too, did the One who is not ashamed to call Himself our brother. We live eternally by standing before God on the righteousness that Jesus Christ provided at the cost of his own life.

He is our example of 'bearing one another's burdens.' (Ephesians 5:21-33; Matthew 20:26-28) To be like Jesus means being a servant. For husbands this means servant leadership. For wives this means servant submission. Servanthood is the key to a lifelong healthy marriage.

Servanthood is about strength, not weakness (v. 6). It's about security, not insecurity. One is secure enough to do whatever asked to do. It's about giving, not being taken advantage of (v. 8a). If you give willingly, it can't be taken from you. It's about taking care of another's world, not taking care of my world first (v. 8a). It's about being a sacrifice, but not a doormat. It's about pleasing God, not the person you are serving, even if they don't notice or appreciate.

**SERVANT HEADSHIP** describes the man's role in marriage. That means he assumes responsibility for the leadership of the family. He actively initiates instead of sitting back and letting the family drift its own way. As Christ does, the husband leads by serving, by putting the needs of his wife and children ahead of his own. What would Jesus do? Men are His under-shepherds. We are to represent Him by acting in a way He would act if He were in our position. A man does not have any authority to act in any way other than the way Jesus would act. A man does not have carte blanche authority to rule his family, he only has delegated authority to represent Jesus in his family. His role to his family is like that of a pastor to his church. Servant headship is the conscientious and loving use of the authority God grants a husband to ensure that a home (and all its members) honor God and experience His blessings.

A servant leader gives, not just takes. He seeks to glorify his wife and communicates forgiveness even before it is requested. What would Jesus do? Men are His under-shepherds. We are to represent Him by acting in a way He would act if He were in our position. A man does not have any authority to act in any way other than the way Jesus would act. Man does not have carte blanche authority to rule his family, he only has delegated authority to represent Jesus in his family. His role to his family is like that of a pastor to his church. Servant headship is the conscientious and loving use of the authority God grants a husband to ensure that a home (and all its members) honor God and experience His blessings.

**SERVANT SUBMISSION** is the key to the wife's role in marriage. The Greek word "submit" is actually a military term which means to respond to authority. A woman is a responder, and this word recognizes that. ***"Wives, RESPOND to your own husband as unto the Lord!"*** In the Greek it is in the present tense meaning it must be done continually. It is an imperative, meaning it is a command. Finally it is in the middle voice, meaning the woman is benefited by doing this. Submitting/responding isn't just done for the man's sake, so he can fulfill his God-given responsibility of guiding and providing, it is also done for the woman's sake. She benefits by her submission, for that is God's provision and protection for her. When she is in her proper God-given place she benefits greatly. Perhaps that's why Satan attacks this so greatly today.

Yes, a woman is a responder. Men, do you want your wife to treat you like a king? Then treat her like a queen! Man must initiate this response. He must take the lead in showing his wife love and security. Then she will better be able to respond in submission.

Servant submission is first and attitude, then an act. Both are necessary, and in that order. This means she will show unconditional respect and honor to her husband. In reality, a woman isn't just submitting to her husband, she is truly submitting to God. He is in control of all her husband does and is. He trust is in Him. By seeing herself as submitting to Jesus and showing that by submitting to her husband it can be a easier and more complete act for her. This means giving up control, something hard for women who have a hard time trusting others.

Following Jesus' example, too, means going to God with your unmet needs as Jesus did. Don't go to any other false substitute (friends, romance stories, children, etc). Talk to your husband about your unmet needs. Do it in a way to educate him in love, not that he feels criticized or a failure. You shoot yourself in the foot when you do that.

A happy couple had always raised cucumbers and made sweet pickles together. The husband just loved to watch things grow. Thus he spent his winters studying the seed catalogues to get the best possible cucumbers. The whole family enjoyed preparing the soil, planting and caring for the plants. He would often go out and just enjoy the way they grew. His wife loved to make sweet pickles. She studied the best recipes and the best methods of preparing and preserving them. They were such a happy family, and all their visitors went home with a jar of their famous pickles. The church always had a good supply of their pickles as well. People marveled at this family that had found a project to do together. Finally, the man died. The next spring all the children returned home. They said to their mother, "We know how much you love making pickles, so we are going to prepare the garden and plant them for you." The mother smiled and said, "Thanks a lot children, but you don't have to do any planting for I really don't enjoy pickle making. I only did that because your father loved to grow the cucumbers so much." The children were all amazed, but the youngest son was upset, because the father had pulled him aside not too long before and shared with him that he really didn't like growing cucumbers, but only did it to please the mother!

This story may not be a good example of communication, but it does show the loving benefits of being a servant to one's mate. Wouldn't it be great to have a marriage like that? You can. Just be a servant.