



HOW TO BECOME A BETTER HUSBAND: WHAT FAULTS TO AVOID

ARTICLE REPRINTED FROM CATHOLIC FAMILY NOVEMBER 1992

MARCH 2015

1. The "You-do-your-job-and-I'll-do-mine" husband.

This is the husband who adopts the principle that, besides being faithful to his wife, the only contribution he is called upon to make toward the upkeep of the home and the raising of children is the money he makes. He selfishly and wrongly imagines that it is his wife's part of the bargain to go it alone in keeping the home tidy and neat and respectable; to feed, clothe and train the children; to correct and punish them and to tell them what they may and may not do; in short, to do all the work involved in making a home and raising children by herself alone.

This fault does not appear to be very grave during the first year or so of marriage, before there are any children. Even then, however, the first signs of it appear. It is after two or three or more children are born that many husbands prove themselves to be lazy, inconsiderate, independent and selfish. They work seven or eight hours a day in their office or shop, whereas the wife's work is never done, requiring her to be on the go sixteen or seventeen hours a day. They come home from work at night and ensconce themselves at the television or with a newspaper or in a closed-door den and never raise a hand to help with the household chores or to keep the children occupied in a wholesome way. The same pattern of selfishness is adopted on their Saturdays and Sundays and holidays.

Marriage is a partnership in which both husband and wife are intended to work together for the decent upkeep of their home and, above all, the proper supervision and raising of children. Apart from his work at making a living, the husband is bound to give reasonable help to his wife in raising the children and running the home. To fail, to refuse to do this is to make a slave out of his wife.

2. The "Money-Pinching" Husband.

This is the husband who thinks that he should have autocratic charge of all the finances of the family, and that he should keep his wife on an allowance or a dole or a budget that barely covers the stark necessities of housekeeping and her personal requirements. Such husbands refuse to trust their wives with money, or even with a voice in discussion of how the family funds should be used.

In many cases this same kind of husband is very lavish in expenditures on himself and his pleasures, while he makes sure that his wife will never be able to spend anything except for basic necessities, and demands a strict accounting of even such expenses.

This lack of trust, this miserliness, this fanatical tyranny, is one of the sure ways to kill a wife's love, and to make marriage, instead of a partnership, a master-slave relationship.

3. The "I-need-outside-recreation-and-you don't" husband.

This is the man who feels that he must have his nights out and his days off for bowling, golf, the club, the tavern, the gathering with the boys, but who rarely if ever gives his wife an opportunity for relaxation away from the constant duties of the home. As to taking his wife out with him once in a while, he considers that out of the question. In his mind, "she ought to love just staying home and working."

This is positively inhuman. It is like saying, "I am a human being, and therefore I need recreation. My wife is not a human being and therefore should need no recreation."

4. The husband who is married first to his business, and only second (or last) to his wife.

This man is different from the one who works his eight hours a day and then, through laziness, refused to lift a hand at home to help his wife or to do anything for or with his children. This husband is a dynamo of energy, but ninety-nine and nine-tenths percent of his energy and time are spent at his business, in trying to make money, in getting ahead, and one-tenth of one percent is devoted to his wife and home.

This is no criticism of the husband who takes an extra job to help his family financially, or who puts in extra study to make himself fit for an extra job. These things can be done without complete neglect of a wife and children. The man who can forget that he has a wife and children in favour of his business interests should never have married.

HOW TO BECOME A BETTER HUSBAND: WHAT FAULTS TO AVOID

5. The "Mamma's Boy" Husband.

Marriage does not release either a husband or wife from the duty of honouring and loving their mother and father. But it does make duties to their spouse supercede duties to their parents. That is what God said clearly about Adam, the first man and the first husband: "Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh." (Gen. 2:24)

The "mamma's boy" husband never quite leaves his mother. He permits her to have more to say over his actions and plans than his wife. A wife may have planned for weeks, with the approval of her husband, for some trip or outing or relaxation with her husband; if, at the last moment, mamma says no, then the husband can't go.

A husband and wife may have, out of charity, given a place to the former's mother in their home. For major, not minor, reasons this may create an impossible situation. The mother is obviously jealous of her son's wife. She constantly interferes in the management of the home. She is a bad influence on the children. She is driving her daughter-in-law to distraction and a nervous breakdown.

In this situation a good husband will do one or both of two things. First, he will have a stern, unyielding talk with his mother, telling her that only if she stops nagging at and interfering with his wife and children can she remain in the home. If this fails to change her, he will make arrangement for her to live elsewhere.

The bad husband, the "mamma's boy" husband, won't care what happens to his wife and children. His mother comes first. He takes her part against his wife. He listens to her even when she diabolically encourages him not to have more children. He lets his wife suffer immeasurably rather than deal sternly with his mother.

6. The Jealous Husband.

The jealous husband is the one who feels uncertain about his wife's love, often because he knows he is guilty of faults that make him undeserving of it, and who foolishly thinks that he can hold her

loyalty to him only by preventing her from being friendly with anyone else.

The jealous husband would like to imprison his wife, behind a high wall and a moat. He does deprive her of every kind of social life that he can forbid or prevent. He is suspicious of every innocent, friendly contact his wife makes with others. He tries to keep her separated completely from her own family.

This jealous possessiveness, this attempt to imprison a wife apart from all normal human contacts defeats its very purpose. It transforms any feelings of love the wife once had for her husband into feelings of hate. It makes a wife's duty of fidelity to her husband a thousand times more difficult than it should be.

7. The Husband Who Never Manifests His Affection for His Wife.

This is the husband who never gives any outward sign, by word or action, of the love he has for his wife. If she were to ask him whether he still loves her, he would say in a bored, off-hand way: "Of course I love you. Now don't bother me."

Such a statement does not mean a thing to a wife, or rather it may mean so much that it will lead to a deluge of tears. Every husband should know that, no matter what he says, he does not truly love his wife unless he shows and expresses that love in many day-to-day ways. Without the slightest insincerity, but with the renunciation of selfishness, he should often praise her appearance and her work, remember anniversaries with presents, express sympathy for her burdens, above all, just reassure her of his love.

The husband who refuses to manifest his love for his family is usually the same one who refuses to lift a hand to help her with her domestic tasks. Apart from the sexual part of marriage, he wants to live his own self-centred, egotistic, independent life, as though he had never solemnly promised to enter into an all-out partnership with her in establishing a home.