

Reading Plan

Feb 8-Feb 20

By: Faith Malone

Love & Respect

What thoughts and feelings ran through your mind when you thought about love and respect in your own marriage or relationships? Were those thoughts and feelings positive or perhaps negative? Maybe even both? Did you hear something at MomLife yesterday that really stood out to you?



As women, we put so much pressure on ourselves to be perfect in every aspect that we lose sight of what is really important. We often put our children before our husbands, the housework before quality time, and we let our exhaustion outweigh alone time together. It is easier for us to put our husbands on the backburner than to drop one of the many things we are juggling and truly give him the respect he desires. In Ephesians 5:33 God commands us to respect our husbands unconditionally. He doesn't say *but only if he loves you the way you want him to*....No, He says "....let the wife see that she respects her husband." How often are our first thoughts, "He has to EARN my respect!?" Husbands are likewise commanded to *love* their wives unconditionally. That means even when we nag or complain or any of the other less than pleasant things we do. *(No, not us!)* We are both called to love and respect unconditionally. If you are divorced, how you talk to or about your ex in front of your children will teach your children how to show respect. It might be hard in some situations, but remember we are teaching our children through our actions.

Matthew 12:34b says, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." What does this mean for you in your marriage or relationships?

A Prayer Of Commitment

(From *Love & Respect* by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs)

Dear Father,

I need You. I cannot love or respect perfectly, but I know You hear me when I ask You for help. Forgive me where I have been unloving or disrespectful. I open my heart to You, Father. I will not be fearful or angry at You or my spouse. I see myself and my spouse in a whole new light, and I forgive my spouse. I will appreciate my spouse as different, not wrong. Lord, fill my heart with love and reverence for You. Ultimately, this is about You and me. It isn't about my spouse. Thank you for this enlightenment. My greatest reward comes from doing this unto You. Prepare me this day for those moments of conflict. I especially ask You to put love and respect in my heart when I feel unloved or disrespected. There is no credit for loving or respecting when it is easy. At this moment, I believe You hear me. I anticipate Your response. I have on my heart what is on Your heart. I thank You in advance for helping me take the next step. I believe You will reward me, and I believe this touches Your heart as I do this unto You. It's between You and me. I am a true believer.

In the name of Jesus Christ,

Amen

A Challenge

During the next two weeks I challenge you to practice **respecting your husband unconditionally** and **praying for him daily**. If you're single, find ways to show respect to your ex (*whew! I know that might feel especially hard*), the significant man in your life, your children, or other relationships in your life, and pray for them daily. Here's some basic examples of how you might choose to show him respect:

- Surprise him with a text to thank him for something he does for you or the family.
- Leave him a note of encouragement - take notice of what he's accomplished and what he is doing well.
- Speak the words of, "I trust you in...", "I'm so proud of...", "Thank you for...", "I know you can..."
- Give him your undivided attention when hearing about his day (and ask follow-up questions)
- Watching sports with him (or a sci-fi movie or whatever his favorite show is)...EEK!
- Speak highly of him to a friend and/or your children.
- Do something romantic...in the bedroom...make him feel desired.

Or something a little harder...

- Don't undermine his decisions even when you disagree, but choose to trust, appreciate, admire, believe in and honor him in that moment.
- Be intentional about the TONE you use when speaking to him and choose loving, patient, graceful words instead of angry, smug or contemptuous words.
- Approach conflict with the mentality that you are on the same team, that he really does have good intentions toward you.

In whatever way(s) you choose, what a perfect time to start this adventure with Valentine's Day this month! Plan a date to his favorite restaurant, cook his favorite meal, or surprise him with something he loves. Find out what his love language is if you don't already know. Is his love language acts of service, quality time, words of affirmation, gifts, or physical touch? Be creative in finding ways over the next two weeks to SHOW him you love and respect him in one of the clearest ways you can - through *his* love language. **Don't forget to pray** for your husband/significant man in your life as well. It will greatly help you along this journey. If you are struggling to respect, **pray**. It is harder to be mad at someone you are truly praying for. If you are feeling an abundance of love and gratitude, **pray**. Thank God for all that you are grateful for and continue to pray for your husband/significant man in all areas. Struggling with loneliness and longing in being single, **pray**. Express those desires, wounds, and longings to God and pray for God to prepare your heart for current and future relationships to honor Him. Pray for help showing respect to your ex, and being a good example to your children of how to show respect even when it's hard. Don't know where to begin? Or what to even say when praying? The included prayers are a great place to start.

Brainstorm

Go ahead and write down a few ideas of how you can show your husband/ex/significant man in your life unconditional respect and make a note of what you want to be praying for him. Since these things might not come naturally (or magically overnight), make a plan. And remember to give yourself some grace as you are in the process of growing in these things. You might even want to include some ways you can show your children what it means to respect unconditionally.

A Prayer to Start Your Journey

(From *The Power of a Praying Wife Book of Prayers* by Stormie Omartian)

Lord, help me to be a good wife. I fully realize that I don't have what it takes to be one without Your help. Take my selfishness, impatience, and irritability and turn them into kindness, longsuffering, and the willingness to bear all things.

Take my old emotional habits, mind-sets, automatic reactions, rude assumptions, and self-protectiveness, and make me patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled.

Take the hardness of my heart and break down the walls with Your battering ram of revelation. Give me a new heart and work in me Your love, peace, and joy (Galatians 5:22-23). I am not able to rise above who I am at this moment. Only You can transform me.

In Jesus' name I pray.

“Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive them, that your father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.” (Mark 11:24-25)

Are there any areas where you need to practice forgiveness with yourself, your spouse, your ex? Take a moment and pray through those... trusting that God is the ultimate forgiver and is able to heal those disappointments and wounds.

Track It

Use this chart to keep track of how you pray and purposefully show respect each day.

Date	How I showed respect & prayed today.	Date	How I showed respect & prayed today.
Fri Feb 8		Fri Feb 15	
Sat Feb 9		Sat Feb 16	
Sun Feb 10		Sun Feb 17	
Mon Feb 11		Mon Feb 18	
Tues Feb 12		Tues Feb 19	
Wed Feb 13		Wed Feb 20	
Thur Feb 14		Thur Feb 21	

Example Prayers

(From *The Power of a Praying Wife Book of Prayers* by Stormie Omartian)

→ Every place where you see a blank, insert the name of your husband, ex, significant other, or future spouse.

His Mind

Lord, I pray for Your protection over _____'s mind. Shield him from the lies of the enemy. Help him to clearly discern between Your voice and any other, and show him how to take every thought captive as You have instructed us to do.

May he thirst for Your Word and hunger for Your truth so that he can recognize wrong thinking. Give him strength to resist lying thoughts. Where the enemy's lies have already invaded his thoughts, cleanse his mind. Lord, You have given me authority "over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19).

By that authority given to me in Jesus Christ, I command any lying spirits away from my _____'s mind. I proclaim that You, God, have given _____ a sound mind.

In Jesus' name I pray.

"Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

His Work

Lord, I pray that You would bless the work of _____'s hands. May his labor bring not only favor, success, and prosperity, but great fulfillment as well. If the work he is doing is not in line with Your perfect will for his life, reveal it to him. Show him what he should do differently and guide him down the right path. Give him strength, faith, and vision for the future so he can rise above any propensity for laziness. May he never run from work out of fear, selfishness, or a desire to avoid responsibility. On the other hand, help him to see that he doesn't have to work himself to death for man's approval. Give him the ability to enjoy his success without striving for more. Help him to excel, but free him from the pressure to do so.

In Jesus' name I pray.

“Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before unknown men.” (Proverbs 22:29)

His Work

God, I pray that You will be Lord over _____'s work. May he bring You into every aspect of it. Give him enough confidence in his gifts You've placed in him to be able to seek, find, and do good work. Open up doors of opportunity for him that no man can close.

Develop his skills so that they grow more valuable with each passing year. Show me what I can do to encourage him. I pray that his work will be established, secure, successful, satisfying, and financially rewarding.

Let him be like a tree planted by the stream of Your living water, which brings forth fruit in due season. May he never wither under pressure, but grow strong and prosper (Psalm 1:3).

In Jesus' name I pray.

“Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.” (Psalm 90:17)

His Purpose

Lord, I pray that _____ will clearly hear the call You have on his life. Help him to realize who he is in Christ and give him certainty he was created for a high purpose. Enable him to walk worthy of his calling and remind him of what You've called him to be. Don't let him get sidetracked with things that are unessential to Your purpose.

Strike down discouragement so that it will not defeat him. Lift his eyes above the circumstances of the moment so he can see the purpose for which You created him. Give him patience to wait for Your perfect timing. I pray that the desires of his heart will not be in conflict with the desires of Yours. May he seek You for direction and hear when You speak to his soul.

In Jesus' name I pray.

“The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory... give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” (Ephesians 1:17-18)

His Walk

O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps (Jeremiah 10:23). Therefore, Lord, I pray that You would direct _____'s steps. Lead him in Your light, teach him Your way, so he will walk in Your truth.

I pray that he would have a deeper walk with You and an ever-progressing hunger for Your Word. May Your presence be like a delicacy he never ceases to crave.

Lead him on Your path and make him quick to confess when he strays from it. Reveal to him any hidden sin that would hinder him from walking rightly before You. May he experience deep repentance when he doesn't live in obedience to Your laws.

In Jesus' name I pray.

“Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart.” (Psalm 15:1-2)

His Obedience

Lord, I pray that You would give _____ a heart to obey You. Reward him according to his righteousness and according to the cleanness of his hands (Psalm 18:20).

Show him Your ways, O Lord; teach him Your paths. Lead him in Your truth, for You are the God of his salvation (Psalm 25:4-5). Make him a praising person, for I know that when we worship You we gain clear understanding, our lives are transformed, and we receive power to live Your way.

Help him to hear Your specific instructions to him and enable him to obey them. Give him a longing to do Your will and may he enjoy the peace that can come only from living in total obedience to Your commands.

In Jesus' name I pray.

“Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.” (Jeremiah 7:23)

Remember

When you find it hard to show respect, use our Scripture focus to draw strength from as you take on the challenge of unconditional respect.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing songs and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the father through Him.

Colossians 3:12-17 (ESV)

What a great example of how to love and show unconditional respect!

Journal some thoughts about what unconditional respect looks like to you, through a compassionate heart, kindness, humility, meekness (gentleness), patience, forgiveness, love, harmony, thankfulness, and the peace of Christ.

At the end of the two weeks, write down some thoughts about how this practice of regular prayer and showing of respect impacted your heart or maybe your overall relationship with your man.

With your kids and/or spouse:

- Pray the “Prayer Of Commitment” together with your husband.
- Be brave and ask your husband: *How can I best show you respect? How do I show you respect well? How can I improve on showing you how much I respect you?*
- Ask your children: *What do you think respect means? How can I show you respect? How can you show me respect?*
- Start a kindness board for your children to write something they do each day that shows love and respect.

Resources....

Books:

- *Love & Respect* by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs
- *The 5 Love Languages* by Gary Chapman
- *The 5 Love Languages Military Edition* by Gary Chapman & Jocelyn Green
- *The Love Dare* by Stephen Kendrick & Alex Kendrick
- *The Power of a Praying Wife Book of Prayers* by Stormie Omartian
- *Fierce Marriage* by Ryan & Selena Fredrick

Facebook Page/Blog:

- Fierce Marriage

Movies:

- War Room
- Fireproof