

Are You a God-centered Spouse?

(from *The Sacred Romance* by Gary Smalley)

--- It all comes down to this: are you a God-centered spouse or a spouse-centered spouse? A spouse-centered spouse acts nicely toward her husband when he acts nicely toward her. She is accommodating as long as her husband pays her attention. A spouse-centered husband will go out of his way for his wife, as long as she remains agreeable and affectionate. He'll romance her, as long as he feels rewarded for doing so.

But, Paul tells us we are to perfect holiness out of reverence for God. Since God is always worthy to be revered, we are always called to holiness; we are always called to love. A God-centered spouse feels more motivated by his or her commitment to God than by whatever response a spouse may give. Spouse-centered Christians try to make excuses to stop loving their spouses because of their spouses' sins. But, if this were a valid excuse, every one of us could avoid the call to love, since every one of us married a sinner! I am not called to love my wife no matter how incredible she treats me; I am called to love her out of reverence for God. Any other motivation is less than Christian.

If I am to rid myself of anything that may contaminate body or spirit, then I can give no place in my life to jealousy, bitterness, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. Someone else's sin - even the sin of my spouse against me - never gives me the license to respond with sin. I am called to just one motivation, and only one: reverence for God. In one sense, what my spouse says or does or doesn't do is almost irrelevant. Every decision I make, every word I utter, every thought I think, is to flow out of one holy motivation: reverence for God.

..... I am called to love my wife like nobody ever has and nobody ever will. I am called to be the one person so devoted to her overall good that I commit myself to being there on her behalf, regardless of any disappointments or faults, so that on the day I die, while my wife may well remember the many bad habits I carried with me to my grave, she might yet say, "But you know what? That man loved me like I've never been loved; I can't imagine ever being loved like that again." If she can say this then I'll know I've "succeeded" at this thing called marriage. It won't be about dying happier than other men; it'll be out whether I have truly loved.

1 Cor 13:4-8 NIV

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.

