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### *Loving a Woman*

I thought it would be good to have some conversation this month about loving a woman. Now, let me be the first to confess a few things. **First**, I am a student in this area, not an expert. After nineteen years of marriage, I feel like I'm just scratching the surface. As a sojourner, I simply share insights and thoughts. My prayer is that God would father us, as men, in a process of loving a woman well, really well. And **second**, this is a much opposed area. We must remember the battle taking place daily against our marriages. It would be easy to buy into many lies when it comes to loving a woman: this is too much, she is too much, I can never do this, it's too late, I've messed up too much over the years, I'm just not good at this, etc. And the list goes on. Our enemy, Satan, is the father of lies. Stand against those lies...by God's grace and strength, we can love her well and point her to the One who loves perfectly. (And don't miss the list on back!)

*Here are 4 thoughts on loving a woman...*

1. **Validation.** This is foundational. Because of the brokenness of man stemming from the Fall in Genesis 3, a man looks to Eve for validation. A woman can easily become man's source of worth and value. When we give a woman the power to validate us, we equally give her the power to devalue us. Woman cannot validate man. This is something only God can provide for a man. We must look to God to father us, validate us, heal us, and empower us.
2. **Know her story.** To fight for and shepherd a woman's heart, a man must know her story. How much of her story do you know? Do you know the intricacies of her early years? What hurts and wounds does she carry? What's her relationship with her Dad like? And Mom? What about her dreams and desires? There is no formula for loving a woman. Spend time getting to know her story...not just the facts but also what lies underneath the facts.
3. **Fight for her.** There is a battle taking place which means that she has an enemy. Satan has a target on the heart of your woman. She bears God's image in her beauty, strength, vulnerability, and mercy. And the Villain hates her for it. Instead of battling against her, we must battle with her against the Enemy. Based on her story, what are the specific ways that she has been opposed: comparison, self-image, wounds, doubt, fear, etc.
4. **Shepherd her.** If the battle calls forth the warrior, then shepherding calls forth the lover/shepherd in a man. Every woman carries wounds, hurts, and struggles in her heart. As trust is earned, a man is able to extend the mercies of God toward her wounded, sometimes fearful heart. God alone can heal and strengthen her feminine heart...but we can at least pave the way for that to happen.

Brothers, I must admit, this is difficult stuff. I feel like I have failed in so many ways over the years. There is a part of me that says this is way too hard and I just can't do it. Without the validation and life of God, I cannot. Without his fathering of me, I will only bring her my needy heart. With God's strength and guidance, we can bring her a full heart, a validated heart. We can love her well. On the back of this newsletter, you will find a list...a treasure of sorts. Definitely read over and study. We are in this together and we can honor God in the ways that we love the woman in our lives.

Randy

*Over the years, we have asked women to answer the question, “How do you want to be loved, as a woman?”  
Here are some of their answers...insights into Eve’s heart...*

I want to be known.  
Instead of fixing me, I’d rather have a listening ear.  
I want to feel special.  
I need to “see” your love.  
Defend me and take up for me.  
Be interested in my past...thoughts, dreams, doubts, and fears.  
Keep your word...follow through on what you said you would do.  
A loud and abrasive tone shuts me down.  
Pursue me in non-sexual ways.  
Know my passions and my goals for life.  
I want you to be the first to say, “Let’s pray about that.”  
Verbal praise makes me feel loved.  
Simple affection in public, like holding hands or putting your arm around me.  
If I don’t feel like you know or care for me, I am not going to open up sexually.  
Romance me and flirt with me.  
I love dates...especially when he handles the details.  
Small gifts...particularly on “non-holidays.”  
Initiate spiritual conversations.  
I want you to be a warrior and a lover.  
I want to fight against the enemy with you...so include me in your prayers and bible study.  
I want to feel treasured.  
Communication is very important to me.  
I want to matter to you.  
Help me experience alone time...time just for me.  
Let’s talk about our walks with God.  
Lead our family toward a deeper walk with God.  
I want to feel special and loved deeply.  
Pray for me...and let me know that you are.  
I want to feel secure and stable in our relationship.

Instead of receiving this as a to-do list or a “man-up” chart, what if we approached this through brokenness...  
“I am sorry for the ways I have hurt you or neglected our relationship, I want to spend a lifetime learning and growing. I want to be a student of you...studying your heart and letting God father me in a process of loving you a bit more with each passing day, month, and year.” Brokenness paves the way for loving her well.