

The  
Husband  
Project

Kathi Lipp



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## THE HUSBAND PROJECT

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*This book is completely and totally dedicated to my husband, Roger Lipp. If it had not been for the questionable judgment you showed when you said, "I think you need to give this speaking and writing thing to God and see what He does with it," none of this would have ever happened.*

*I still go throughout my day, stop, and pretty much cannot believe that I get to be married to you.*

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Laying a Foundation

# Preparing for The Husband Project





## Why The Husband Project?

“Kathi, a couple of us need to quit the project.”

I couldn’t believe what Angela was saying. Quit The Husband Project? We’d just started that weekend.

“Ange, are you kidding me? Why do you want to quit already?”

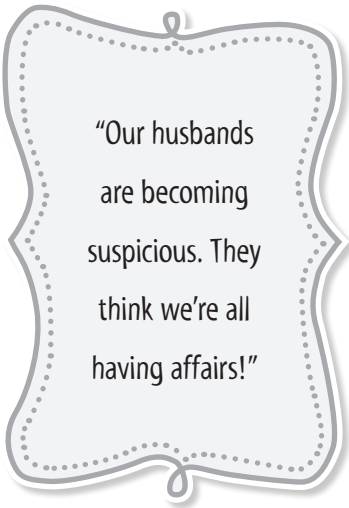
“I was talking to some of the other girls, and because we’re being so nice, our husbands are becoming suspicious. They think we’re all having affairs!”

Apparently, there’s a bigger need for The Husband Project than even I could have expected.

### The Beginning of The Husband Project

At my busy church in San Jose, California, I serve in a variety of roles. Some of the roles I have played have been on the programming team with my husband, Roger (who is the director of the Worship Arts Ministry), leading Bible studies and small groups and taking meals to people who are sick or having babies. But my favorite role by far is mentoring women.

The girls I mentor are smart, funny, and committed to serving God. They really are amazing. However, like most wives I know, they have a tendency to “share” about their husbands.



“Our husbands are becoming suspicious. They think we’re all having affairs!”

“He’s never home. I feel like I’m single—but with an extra person to clean up after.”

“Why is it when he’s watching our kids it’s *babysitting*?”

“We used to be romantic, but now our idea of romance is reading take-out menus together.”

The “sharing” started to concern me. I wasn’t judging these girls, trust me. I found myself slipping every once in a while, saying something “endearing” about my husband while rolling my eyes.

### A Change in Perspective

I know the importance of loving and honoring my husband, and like every other lesson in my life, I learned it the hard way. (Why can’t I ever learn things while eating chocolates and shopping?)

I married in my early twenties, and two babies came along shortly after the marriage vows. In retrospect, I can see that as soon as I discovered the wonders of a Diaper Genie, my concentration shifted from my husband to the day-to-day care of my kids. With a full-time job thrown in, the goal of making my husband feel special dropped way down on my priority list.

After a painful marriage and divorce, I am now remarried to an amazing guy. When new friends meet him they say, “Oh, so this is Prince Charming!” He’s a great father and stepdad, and he loves me and his God and indulges my passion for fat-free coconut yogurt on a regular basis. I really couldn’t ask for a better guy.

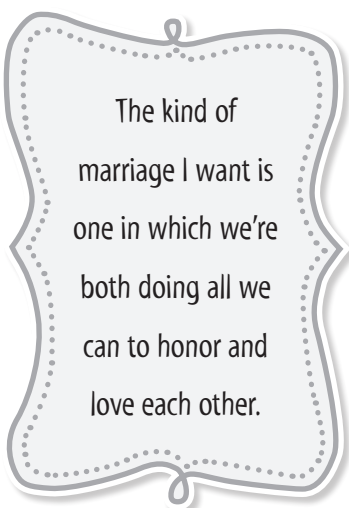
And yet, like a great pair of comfortable flip-flops, he’s sometimes easy to take for granted. He’s always there—not demanding anything of me. He can fix his own frozen pizza when I’m too busy to cook, and he can even wash his own socks in a pinch. When work deadlines loom and kids have dozens of activities, I sometimes let my relationship with Rog fall to sixth or seventh on my “Hey, pay attention to me!” list.

Have you noticed our culture has a one-way expectation that a husband should give his wife what she “needs” (sending flowers to

work, doing his share of the dirty work around the house, being a great dad, remembering and celebrating anniversaries) without asking for anything in return? But, as we know, this fantasy man isn't a real husband; he's a character in a dime-store romance novel.

The kind of marriage I want is one in which we're both doing all we can to honor and love each other, putting each other's needs above our own. Philippians 2:3-4 says it best: "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."

I want this for both of us. The reality is, however, I have control only over my own actions.



The kind of marriage I want is one in which we're both doing all we can to honor and love each other.

## Enter The Husband Project

I tried different ideas with some of my friends at church—a variety of "husband encouragement programs." Most seemed like a lot of work and not much fun. You see, I have the attention span of a third-grader who's just spent six straight hours on Xbox. So I needed something short, doable, and exciting. We, as stressed-out and over-worked wives and moms, don't need to feel burdened by another item on our to-do lists.

So I started thinking and praying about what would truly make my husband feel loved...and maybe even feel lucky to be married to me. I made up a list and began practicing on Roger. Some of the ideas (buying him a gift card to his favorite restaurant and surprising him with an impromptu date) were big hits. Others (like opening mystery clues for an all-day adventure) were, let's say, less than successful.

After several flops (hey, I thought the guys at his work would think

that his lunch sack covered in hearts was adorable) I finally got desperate. I asked him, “Okay, what would make you feel loved?” And yes, I felt pretty pathetic to be asking. After showing him the list, he gave me thumbs up or down on several of the items. I now had a much clearer plan in place. No, cookies in the shapes of bunnies were not necessary. Homemade raw cookie dough, however, was a big thumbs-up. Yes, I asked the questions. I have gone where women fear to tread. I am in possession of the knowledge of what men (or at least my man) like.

This is how The Husband Project was born.

The premise is simple: You and two other friends (your accountability partners) commit to bless your husbands every day for three weeks, in secret.

That’s it. Pretty simple, granted. But not always easy.

## No Cookie-Cutter Marriages

While working on the projects, I talked with friends of all ages, in very different marital situations. Some of my friends were in the oh-so-romantic stage of marriage. You’re just done in by how beautifully he shaves. As you pick up his clothes from the bedroom floor, you just can’t help but giggle at how adorable it is that he never puts anything away.

On the other side of the spectrum, I have girlfriends who cannot stand to be in the same room with their husbands while they’re breathing. The “inhale-exhale” is enough to make them want to take up residence at a nice studio apartment in town.

And then there are the other 94 percent of us.

We’re the ones who love our husbands but have fallen into a comfortable routine (*comfortable* often meaning, *you don’t bug me and I won’t bug you*). We’re partners in parenting and contributors to financial matters. We’ve negotiated the household chores (“I’ll do the dishes if you keep the car from making funny noises”) and keep each other on schedule for the dentist and the occasional oil change.

We like our husbands, for the most part. And they like us, for

the most part. While this is okay, it's definitely not what we were anticipating as we planned our weddings and dreamed about our happily-ever-after lives.

I have to admit, I'm writing this book for me and my friends—the 94 percent who want better relationships with our men and are willing to be creative, thoughtful, and possibly daring enough to break out some lingerie to get it.


### “But He Doesn't Even Notice”

Some women who have tried the projects for a few days wondered if it's even worth it. After doing several of the projects, they complained that their husbands have barely noticed.

So, if you're wearing your cute jeans to meet your husband in the evenings, leaving bags of Gummi Bears for him in his car, and wearing skimpier and skimpier lingerie to bed each night without comment from your man, don't be discouraged.

Working on The Husband Project is a lot like working on your prayer life. I recently committed to set aside a chunk of time daily to pray. As I devote more time to prayer and meditation, I'm realizing that my requests are less about asking God to make things go my way and more about asking God to change my heart to follow Him and *His* plans for me.

The Husband Project is as much about changing *our* attitudes as it is about blessing our husbands. It's great to get positive reinforcement, and when you do, write it down so you can remember it and tailor the way that you show your love in the future. But even when your husband says nothing, you have the knowledge that you have actively



The Husband Project is as much about changing *our* attitudes as it is about blessing our husbands.

shown him love and support. That's the true gift of The Husband Project.

If you still need some affirmation (and who doesn't?) look for it in other healthy places. In my case I have a friend, Lynn, who sends me a small gift whenever I complete a writing goal. Even if I don't sell an article, I still have the hope of some great Snoopy stickers in the mail.

Ask your accountability partners to celebrate your successes with you. Perhaps if each of you does your daily project for seven days, you give each other a \$5 Starbucks card, or if you do all 21 days, you spend an afternoon together at the spa. Be creative. As it says in Hebrews 10:24, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." A grande latte could be an excellent way to start.

In the next chapter, I'll walk you through a step-by-step guide for launching your own Husband Project.

# A Quick How-to Guide for The Husband Project

The purpose of The Husband Project is to spend 21 days loving and supporting your husband, intentionally. Remember, this is a secret. Hide the book at work, in your car, anywhere that your husband will not see it.

Here's your step-by step guide to doing The Project.

## **1. Read through all of the projects.**

This is your chance to get a feel for all 21 of the projects. Be sure to use all of this book. Make notes in the margins, scribble and doodle on the pages, and start to think about ways to tailor each project to your husband.

## **2. Find two other friends who want to do The Husband Project and will hold you accountable.**

It doesn't matter if they're phone friends, Internet buddies, or face-to-face girlfriends you meet with at Starbucks down the street. Location is not important; consistency is. Figure out a time to spend together (after everyone has read through the book) to come up with a plan for when and how you're going to do the projects.

## **3. Sign The Husband Project Accountability Covenant** (see page 33).

## **4. Decide on a start date.**

It can be tomorrow or two weeks from now. Mark it in a big bold

way on your kitchen calendar. Set up reminders on your computer. I recommend that you give yourself a couple of days to get ramped up and pull together a plan that you're excited about—one you know will bless your guy.

### **5. Look over the projects and come up with your personalized plans.**

*You* decide how you're going to bless your husband each day. I've provided a variety of ideas, but it's up to you to decide how you'll carry out each day's project. Get creative and come up with a new and wonderful way to raise your husband's eyebrows.

Write down in advance what you're going to do for each day in the space provided at the end of each project. Then copy the plan for that day on The Husband Project Planner at the back of this book.



I have recently lost a bunch of weight. One of the key elements in making this happen (besides putting down the chocolate) has been to write down what I'm going to eat rather than keeping a log of what I already ate. Put purpose and a plan to work. That's how you'll experience winning results.

As you read through the projects, you will start to notice a theme developing. Lots of the projects are centered around certain topics: food, encouragement, your appearance, and acts of service. I promise this is not a case of me just running out of ideas. These were the types of projects that the women who did The Husband Project got the best results with.

Do your best to complete each project each day and see if you don't agree that these projects are some of the ones that will bless your husband the most.



You'll also need to make some specific plans along the way. Is there a night when you'll need babysitting? Get on the phone now. Is there a special candy that you can get only online and need to order now for next Saturday's project? Order it in advance so you'll be ready.

## **6. Share your project plans with your accountability partners.**

I recommend that you make copies of your planner pages to share with your accountability partners. (There's a Project Planner in the Tools of The Husband Project section at the back of this book.) That way, you can commit to pray for each other as well as lend support on days that may be particularly challenging. Who knows, your accountability partners may have some great, creative ideas to share.

## **7. Be flexible.**

If one of the projects doesn't line up with your husband's schedule, swap it for another day. If food does nothing for him, find another way to treat your hubby. This is all about connecting with him. The intention of The Husband Project is not to make you crazy, but to find new ways to bless and support your husband. Just do *something*, intentionally, every day.



## Why 21 Days?

“Jill, I have to be honest with you. I hate this—and by extension, I am growing to hate you. I hope you realize it’s nothing personal.”

Jill understood, but she was not going to grant me the “Get Out of Exercising” card I was looking for.

“Kath—just give it three weeks. I promise you, it won’t feel like you’re walking to the guillotine every day if you just stick with it.”

When I was in my early twenties, I had the opportunity to do some short-term missions work in Japan. While some of my friends were toiling on the plains of Africa, digging wells and starting community businesses in remote villages, I decided on a less *Survivor*-esque adventure by teaching conversational English in air-conditioned classrooms near Kyoto. (Hey, we all have our own level of roughing it. Mine was living two trains away from a McDonald’s.)

After the first week, I realized I had a big problem. While in the United States, I relied on my bright orange ’74 Honda to get me the two and a half blocks to the grocery store. Walking was for losers who didn’t have cars. However, in Japan, my main form of transportation was pedal power. I had a pink bike (bell and flowered basket included) that I rode everywhere. The problem was that after a few blocks, I was not only winded, I was completely wiped. That, plus the fact that I lived on the fourth floor of my apartment building with no elevator, showed me all too clearly which of my muscles hadn’t been used in a while. I knew that I needed to get into better physical condition if I was going to survive the year abroad.

One of my expatriate coworkers, Jill, was the undisputed aerobics queen of Kyoto. She was also one of those annoying people who just

could not imagine starting her day without some carrot-wheatgrass juice and a “quick” 45-minute workout.

No one liked her.

OK, perhaps I am projecting a bit. There were plenty of people who loved Jill. I just wasn’t one of them as she waxed poetic about the number of calories burned by abdominal crunches.

After foolishly opening up to her about my struggle with getting around town, “Jumping-Jacks Jill” promised me she could whip me into shape in no time at all.

Jill showed up at my apartment every day with a Jane Fonda workout video and a smile. After the first couple of workouts, I desperately wanted out. I

spent the next couple of weeks trying to come up with every excuse I could muster to get out of our healthy bonding time.

“I’m tired.”

“I’m having my period.”

“I’m concerned that my downstairs neighbors are experiencing aftershocks.”

“I don’t know how that hammer got jammed in the VCR.”

It didn’t matter; Jill was consistent. She already had the habit of daily exercise built into her life. Now she was trying to indoctrinate me into her sick little plan.

By the beginning of the third week, I had moved from outright hostility to begrudging resignation. I wasn’t exactly excited to see Jill on my doorstep each morning, but I figured it was easier to just get the exercise out of the way than to keep breaking the VCR.

Now, here’s the weird thing...

After about a month, Jill had to go to Tokyo for some work-related training. I thought, *Oh, thank God. I need a day off from all of this! I*

“Motivation is what  
gets you started.

Habit is what keeps  
you going.”

—Jim Ryun, former  
world record holder  
for the mile run

*can sleep in, I can read a book. I don't have to jump around like a fool...* I looked forward to my day off as though it were a Macy's preseason sale.

When that glorious Tuesday arrived, I woke up and felt odd and disoriented. I was kind of lost, just puttering around my apartment, not knowing what to do with myself, completely out of sorts. And then it hit me.

I missed exercising.

I couldn't believe it either. Jill had sucked me over to the Dark Side. After just a few weeks, the habit of exercise had become so ingrained in me that not only did I no longer consider it a burden, I actually missed it.

You may start off the whole Husband Project champing at the bit. "My husband's not going to know what hit him! I'm going to blow him away with all the love and affection he can handle. Gourmet dinners, creative and meaningful Bonus Projects, and all the praise I can think of."

Then you get to Project 3—and you're tired of all this already.

"I don't have time to do all this nice stuff. Don't you know I have a life outside of my marriage?"

"I'm tired."

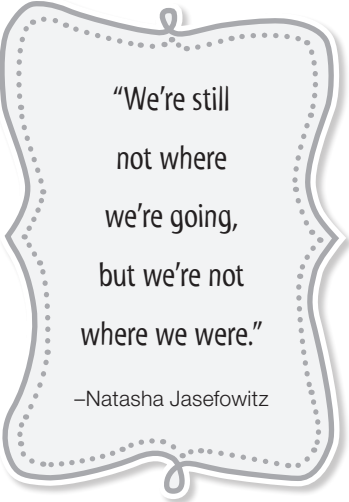
"I'm having my period."

"We don't have the money."

"Once he starts acting nice, I'll start acting nice."

That's why it's so important to commit to the 21 days, right up front.

I was told over and over by an über-exuberant gym teacher that it takes 21 days to build or thoroughly break a habit. I believe that building good habits to encourage our husbands means putting our relationship on "project status." After the 21 days,



"We're still  
not where  
we're going,  
but we're not  
where we were."

—Natasha Jasefowitz

most women will become so attuned to thinking about ways to love their husband *on purpose* that it will be natural to act that way every day.

One aspect of all this is to give up our idea that if we miss one day of projects the whole thing is a failure. I know—I tend to be an all-or-nothing kind of girl, maybe a lot like you.

If you miss a day, don't beat yourself up. Just pick up again and keep going. It may take you 60 days to do 21 projects. That's OK. Just keep going.

If the LORD delights in a man's way,  
he makes his steps firm;  
though he stumble, he will not fall,  
for the LORD upholds him with his hand.  
(Psalm 37:23-24)

Twenty-one days is just the starting point. With The Husband Project, you have a structure to work within and a goal to meet. The purpose of the 21 days is not to be able to check off the projects and be done with it, but instead, to train our minds to think about our man and consider his needs every day.

## I've Got a Secret... and So Should You

Let me be honest with you...telling your husband about The Project is a big mistake.

This may feel counterintuitive to you. Perhaps your husband knows every little thing about you. You tell each other everything. You call each other on your lunch breaks and go over the details of your day. He knows what kind of yogurt you had this afternoon at 3:00 p.m.

Great. Still, don't tell him.

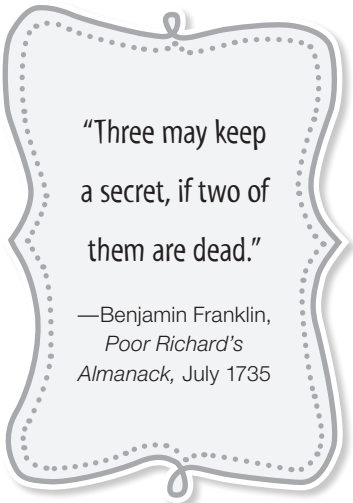
I normally would never advise any woman to keep a secret from her husband. That is just bad marriage management. Plus, it always gets you into trouble in the end. You can hide those Target bags in the back of your closet for only so long. Eventually, the Visa bill shows up in the mailbox.

But may I be so bold as to suggest The Husband Project deserves a special dispensation in your upfront, tell-all marriage relationship? Perhaps you could embrace the broader communication style of "Don't Ask; Don't Tell," only for The Husband Project, of course.

Consider this similar situation: I had a milestone birthday this year. My husband knew it was important to me that I celebrate in a big way. So for about five weeks he conspired with all my best and most creative friends to throw me a surprise party. I kinda knew something was up, but was thrilled when I walked into my friend Mary's house to 20 of my closest friends screaming, "*Surprise!*"

Yes, Roger kept a secret from me. Was I mad? Did I feel betrayed by him keeping something from me? No. My thoughts never went

to, *How could you do this to me? We tell each other everything!* I felt so loved and cherished that he would take the time and the energy to go to all that trouble. He managed every detail, down to having my favorite Margherita-style pizza ready and waiting for me when I got there. I felt incredibly blessed, treasured, and honored.



“Three may keep  
a secret, if two of  
them are dead.”

—Benjamin Franklin,  
*Poor Richard's  
Almanack*, July 1735

Because I knew that he had put so much time and thought into the party to make me feel oh-so-special, I remember that as one of the best days of my life.

It should be the same with The Husband Project. One of the main reasons to keep it a secret is to keep it fun. Get some of your best girlfriends to help you plan. Keep this book with you at work, in the back of your car, or hidden in the spare room he never goes into. One friend actually made a notebook with a fake cover. She called it her Home Management Journal, recognizing that if her husband was happy, she could *manage* to stay living in the same home with him.

### Keep Expectations Low

If your husband knows that you're doing The Husband Project, suddenly he's going to start looking to see if you're doing things “right.” We want our guys to feel honored and loved, but if he knows what's going on, it may begin to feel more like a burden to you than a blessing. You don't want to get to the point of feeling that this is one more chore to mark off your list. The idea of each project is to turn our hearts and minds toward our husbands, not to make sure that we “make it through” another marriage book.

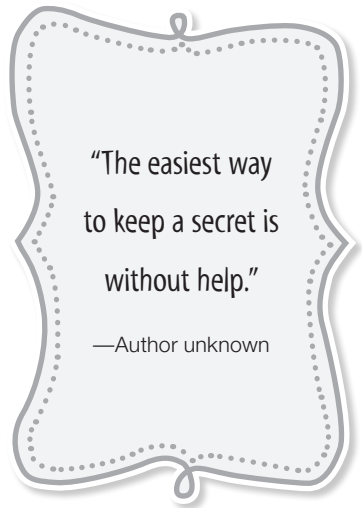
Besides, if he discovers the Bonus Projects, that may be the only thing he looks forward to all week.



## Keep It Simple

It may tip your hand if one day you barely notice when your husband gets home, and the next day you're slipping on your tiniest teddy and attacking him as he walks through the door.

The objective is not to make huge splashes in your marriage; it's to raise the level *overall*. Do something, every day, to let him know that you love him and are glad the two of you are married. When you continually look for avenues to bless him, he won't be quite so shocked (or suspicious) when it happens.



## Other Ways to Keep It Undercover

- When e-mailing your accountability partners, make sure you don't use a joint account that both you and your husband log on to. You wouldn't want him to see your plans for flirty text messages, now would you? Yahoo has free e-mail accounts for the asking. Sign up at [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com).
- Hide your calendar of activities somewhere he won't discover it. The laundry area is a safe bet in my house—no one goes there except for dire clean underwear emergencies.
- Play it cool. Don't start giggling as soon as he walks in the door and say, "Woo-hoo, have I got a surprise for you!" Make your projects a part of your everyday routine.
- Don't tell anyone else what you're doing. Loose Lips Sink Ships—and The Husband Project. Don't tell his mom, don't tell his best friend, don't tell anyone who's in regular contact with your hubby.
- Use a code word. Perhaps when you're chatting with your

friends about getting together to make your plans, you could say, “Hey, let’s meet at Starbucks on Wednesday to discuss the project [the plan, the agenda].”

- Get your kids involved. No, don’t tell them that you’re working on The Husband Project. Just help them figure out ways to bless their dad that they can take credit for. That way, you’re still loving and encouraging your husband, and including your kids in the process.

### **Keep It Fun for You, Too**

There’s something about conspiring with other like-minded women that will keep you motivated even when you’re tired, grumpy, and just not getting that lovin’ feeling back from your hubby. Take the extra care it will require to keep this a secret. You’ll both be blessed in the process.

### **And If He Does Find Out**

So he saw an e-mail from an accountability partner. He found this book under the front seat of the car. Oh well. Don’t give up. Tell him that you’re working hard on changing so that he feels more loved and appreciated. Any smart man will stop asking questions right then and just enjoy the ride.

## Accountability: The Key to Making It Work

I'm famous for starting projects that never quite see completion. I have about \$700 worth of scrapbooking materials and drawers filled with beads and fasteners, all taking up space in my home. We won't even begin to discuss the number of new-and-never-opened books I have jammed on my bookshelves (and under my bookshelves, and under my bed...).

We all have projects that we start enthusiastically and never manage to finish. Don't let this happen to you with The Husband Project.

There are several ways to assure that you stick with it for the long haul. Putting your plan on paper or jotting it in this book is one way to up your chances of doing all 21 projects. Prayer is definitely key to persisting through your project when your husband has been, let's say, less than charming that day. But by far the biggest determinant for whether you complete The Husband Project or this book gets conveniently lost under your bed is having a couple of committed accountability partners.

In the company of good friends, your experience with The Project will be more fun, more creative, and you'll increase greatly your chances of completion.

### Choosing Your Project Crew

Decide on the two people you would most like to take this journey with. My suggestion is to find friends who will share a sense of


adventure (or at least are willing to think outside the box a bit). Think trusted confidantes, women who can talk about lingerie and maybe even...sex! (This automatically eliminates, for most of you, your mom, his mom, daughters, and all his ex-girlfriends.)

When it came time for me to pick my partners, I spent some time thinking and praying about the women I would choose to hold me accountable. I needed women who would be fun, innovative, and willing to give me a swift kick in the behind when I began slacking. As you know, there will most likely be days when you won't want to look at your husband, much less lovingly fix a delightful little snack for him.

Location is not important. For several years, one of my accountability partners lived clear across the United States, and the other a mere four blocks away. It was challenging at first, but we made it work. E-mail was a godsend, and every once in a while, in a crisis, we would call each other. I seriously considered changing cell phone plans at one point to keep my costs down.

You may want to balance out the dynamics of your group by taking into account each woman's personality.

While I'm creative and can think of 20 ways to flirt with my husband before breakfast, actually putting a plan down on a calendar is a challenge for me. That's why I need someone like my friend Angela in my life. While she's creative, her main strength is implementing; she easily puts those great ideas into action. She's the one who will e-mail me daily reminders about what surprise we've planned for our husbands each day: "It's Monday, must be back massages today!" or "Have you Bonused this week?"



We all have projects that we start enthusiastically and never manage to finish.

## Why Two Friends?

I love this story in Exodus 17:8-13 about a group of supportive friends:

The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. Moses said to Joshua, “Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands.”

So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses’ hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

OK, so let’s break this down. Moses orders Joshua to go attack the Amalekites (who were attacking them, so it seems like a perfectly reasonable thing to do). So Moses, in a show of support, goes to the top of a hill and stands there with the staff of God in his hands.

I don’t know if you’ve ever tried to stand for a long time with something heavy over your head, but I get tired just holding my hands up at church during singing. After just a few minutes it looks like I’m doing an interpretative rendition of the “Worship Macarena”—hands up, hands down, one hand up, one hand out.

As long as Moses held his hands up, his team was winning. But whenever he lowered his hands, his team would get kicked around the field. So his guys, Aaron and Hur, climbed up the hill. And this is what I love, this is the illustration of true friendship: Those two friends came alongside Moses and not only held up his hands, but pulled up a rock so that Moses could sit down. They provided comfort and support to their friend who was standing in the battle.

As wives, there will be many circumstances where we’re called to

do extraordinary things for our marriage as it weathers the seasonal rough spots, unforeseen challenges, and sometimes all-out battles. It is precisely at these times that we need the support and comfort of friends who will not allow us to give up, but will, with conviction and resolve, help us stand and win when we feel overcome and overrun.

Choose these women wisely. They will get to know you and your marriage intimately. Make a commitment that when you meet (online, in your local coffee shop, wherever), what happens in your group stays in your group.

### **The Accountability Covenant**

Once you have chosen your crew, make sure you sign the following Accountability Covenant for each other. This will give you the extra reminder of the concrete decision you have made to see The Husband Project through to the end, and your agreement to hold each other up when you feel like falling down.

Accountability will not only keep you focused and on task, it will make doing The Project a lot more fun.

## The Husband Project Accountability Covenant

### The Covenant

We the readers of *The Husband Project* enthusiastically agree to enter into an accountability relationship with each other for the sole purpose of engaging in and completing all projects to intentionally love and support our husbands. As accountability partners we vow to:

- hold each other accountable (even if that means a swift kick in the you-know-what)
- call each other at least three times a week
- put our plans on paper and discuss them with each other
- laugh only *with* each other, not *at* each other
- not talk badly about our husbands for the 21 days
- pray for each other every day for the 21 days
- keep details confidential—what happens in our trio stays in our trio
- ask for help, motivation, or inspiration if we're having a rough go or getting that quittin' feeling

With smiles on our faces and hope in our hearts, we sign and acknowledge "The Husband Project Accountability Covenant" this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_.

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Project Manager

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Accountability Partner

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Accountability Partner





## How to Handle Tough Situations during The Project

As you work through The Husband Project, no doubt some questions will come up. Here are some of the most frequent ones that keep popping up, and my best attempt to answer them.

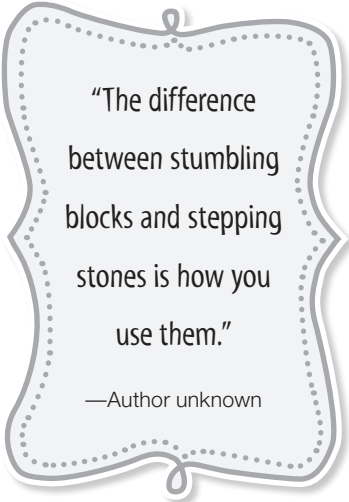
**Question 1:** *Can I keep doing The Project while my husband is traveling? What about when I'm traveling? Is it better to postpone The Project until everyone is under one roof?*

Absolutely keep going on The Project when your husband is out of town. Not every project has to be done face-to-face; in fact, some are better when you're apart. And remember, it's perfectly OK to do a project on Tuesday that he discovers when he arrives home on Saturday.

Here are ideas for how to adapt some of the projects while he's away:

### *Project 20—Post-it Notes, Man's Greatest Invention*

- Put a Post-it in your husband's luggage so he'll find it when he unpacks.
- When you're doing his laundry, leave a love note for him to find in one of his socks.



"The difference between stumbling blocks and stepping stones is how you use them."

—Author unknown

- Leave a note on his bathroom mirror letting him know how much you missed him while he was gone and how glad you are to have him home.

*Project 11—Stress-Be-Gone*

- While he's traveling, make an effort to eliminate one thing that makes him crazy, without any expectation of him noticing when he gets home. Make sure he has clean clothes ready to go for the day after he gets back or fill up his gas tank before he gets back in town.

*Project 15—What Not to Wear*

- Get rid of a piece of clothing. This is perfect for a day when your husband is out of the house so that you can try things on and get rid of anything that either you or he hates.

Words of encouragement can be offered from any location. If you know your husband's travel schedule, it will be easy to save some of those build-him-up projects for the dates of his trip. Words of encouragement projects include:

*Project 3—You da' Man*

*Project 5—E-flirt.com*

*Project 12—Gotcha! Catch Him Doing Something Great*

*Project 16—Is It Getting Hot in Here—Or Is It You?*

*Project 20—Post-it Notes, Man's Greatest Invention*

Here are some creative project ideas you can do while you're the one on the road:

*Project 15—What Not to Wear*

- I have a few items in my wardrobe that I'd be embarrassed to share how much of an extravagance they were. The sad

part is they're not necessarily my husband's favorites. While I'm traveling is a great time to wear and enjoy them without subjecting Roger to them.

### *Project 17—Playing Hooky*

- If you have kids, arrange for one evening of babysitting while you're gone so your husband can have a couple of hours to himself.

### *Project 18—Dinner's on Me*

- Here's a variation on kidnapping your husband and taking him out for dinner. Leave behind a gift card for him to take a friend, a kid, or even his mom out to dinner. You'll get bonus points from everyone involved (especially if your kids aren't in love with Dad's cooking).

### *Project 19—The Service Here Is Excellent*

- Leave a secret stash of food in a basket in your bedroom. I've even put an ice bucket in our room to keep cheese cold for Roger to find.
- Do your own turndown service before you leave. (It isn't complete without the little pillow mint.)

### *Project 21—Car Chases and Karate Chops*

- If you use Netflix or some other subscription service, arrange to have all of his testosterone-driven movies show up while you're traveling. I'm sure seeing some guy get various body parts blown to smithereens will comfort your husband in your absence.
- One time when I was going out of town, I got the latest Superman movie for Roger. I am not the biggest Superman fan, so I knew that Roger would have no guilt in watching

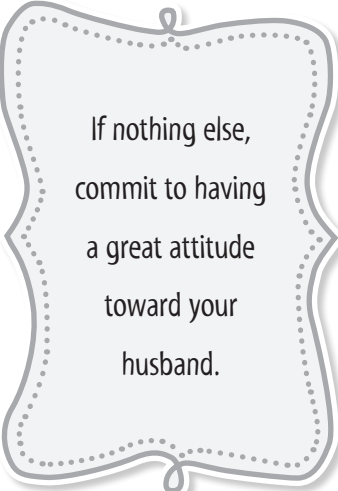
it without me, and I wouldn't have to suffer through it at some point in our movie-viewing future.

While it may seem like an extra burden to do The Husband Project when you or your husband travel, remember your blessing might be the little bit of encouragement he needs while he's out on the road and missing the comforts of home or you're away and he's missing you. When you know the home fires are burning, the road home doesn't seem so long.

**Question 2:** *What if I get sick or am just totally overwhelmed at work? Do I have to do the projects every day, or can I wait until things get a little less hectic?*

Let's be truthful. There are times when you're not going to feel like doing the projects. Life is busy, we get sick, we get tired.

The other side of the truth equation? Your life is probably not going to get any less stressful. (Really, how much easier is your life today than it was a month ago?)



If nothing else,  
commit to having  
a great attitude  
toward your  
husband.

My best advice is to do what you can, plan in advance for the busy times, and if nothing else, commit to having a great attitude toward your husband. If you can do nothing else than thank him for making sure that the box of tissues is within reach while you're sick, that's what you can do at the time.

One of my friends works at a CPA's office. Yes, I would guess that April 15 would not be the best day for her to start

The Project. Don't beat yourself up, or worse, abandon The Project altogether because there's been a delay.

**Question 3:** *Do I still do the projects when I'm fighting with my husband?*  
How to handle this depends on the level of the fight.

*1. I love him to pieces, but he is driving me crazy.*

You fought over how to best prepare the turkey for Thanksgiving. Or, even though you asked your husband to put away the suitcases from your trip three weeks ago, there they sit by the back door.

We all get annoyed with our husbands now and then. Remember to breathe and just keep working on the projects. When I've been the most angry or frustrated with my husband, I've had to picture Jesus standing on the other side of him. I focus on loving Christ, and my husband is just standing in the way, receiving all that love.

It can be very enlightening to "love through the annoyances" and let God work on your heart. But, like most uncomfortable trials, you'll be able to truly enjoy your progress only after you're through the toughest part.

*2. I don't think we will be married in another 21 days.*

I've heard from several women who have fought with their husbands while doing The Project. It's amazing how issues will rise to the surface of your marriage just as you're trying to be intentional about loving your husband no matter what.

This may be the time to get some perspective from another couple you both love and respect, talk to your pastor, or get involved in some marital counseling. Perhaps the best thing The Husband Project will do for some couples is bring up those underlying issues that must be dealt with just so you can start to *like* each other again. Don't be afraid to pursue every option to make your marriage what God intended it to be.

In going through The Husband Project, many wives have come to realize that while there are real problems and difficulties with their husband that needed to be resolved, God was actually working on *their* hearts in certain areas of their marriage.



## Every Marriage Is Different

Not every project I suggest in this book is going to be a good fit for every husband. (Hey, not every project is something *my* husband would enjoy.) My purpose for each project is to hit on the major areas where men feel loved and honored.


In one of the projects, I suggest that if there's a chore your husband hates, you could hire someone else (perhaps a neighborhood kid) to take over and get that chore off his list. My husband would love this. Most likely your husband would love it. And perhaps a few husbands might feel as if you were saying, "OK, you lazy bum. If you are not going to do it, I'll just hire someone who will." Only you know how your guy will respond, so consider his mind-set and happiness when making your plans to bless him.

There are a couple of things to be aware of while working The Husband Project:

### 1. Check your attitude.

The main purpose of The Husband Project is not to change your husband. Really, how much success have you had in past attempts with *that* plan? Instead, it's to initiate change in yourself, your habits, and your heart.

When I do things for Roger, I need



Make sure that  
your actions come  
across as loving,  
not self-serving or  
anticipatory.

to check myself constantly by asking, “Am I doing this to bless him, or for him to recognize me, change for me, or owe me?”

Recently, I received this e-mail from one of our project managers, Sherry:

As the “Suzy Homemaker” type (as my friends all call me), I have always had a priority to make a nice dinner and treat my husband and family with good food. So when I received The Project e-mails about making something special in the kitchen for my husband, I thought, “Ha-ha, I already do that. I’m a step ahead of the game!”

Well, I was bold and decided to share this little bit of information about myself to a good friend, who hit me with a reality check. She asked me what was my motivation for making the special food/dinner for my husband. Was it just the Suzy Homemaker in me, or was I really trying to honor and cherish my husband by making him something special? Well, as you can probably guess, my motivation has not been to treat him special. It was just a thing I already do—nothing extraordinary about it.

I love Sherry’s introspection and candor. By today’s standards she’s a super-wife: she has a beautiful and inviting home, she’s an amazing cook, and she always looks cute and well put together. But when challenged on her motives, she dug deep and realized her efforts were more for herself, to reinforce what she believed to be her role, than they were about purposely blessing her husband.

Sherry hasn’t changed her actions, but after examining her motives she’s being more intentional about meeting her husband’s needs instead of her own expectations. No matter what we do, or how we do it, our attitudes always overshadow our actions.

The other side of this is to make sure that your actions come across as loving, not self-serving or anticipatory. I know that I can go from blessing to Mommy Martyrdom in 2.3 seconds. If I’m trying to love



my guy, and I get no response for the gourmet meal or ironing his shirts, I can become bitter and resentful very quickly.

Here's the caveat: Remember that you aren't doing any of these projects to get *noticed*. If you can secretly bless your husband, even better. Make it your mission to do each project without hoping for a response. Delight in the secret satisfaction of knowing you're doing everything you can to be a blessing to your man.

## 2. Make the projects your own.


You're the only expert on your husband. It's up to you not to simply follow this (or any other marital program) blindly, but to tailor each project to your guy.

You're the only one who will have an inkling of whether there's an issue that would hurt your husband's feelings, bother him, or somehow annoy him. One of our project managers, Linda, knew that with Project 1 ("30 Minutes Is All It Takes: Create Some Free Time When He Gets Home") her man would not take well to being told to sit down and relax for 30 minutes. Instead, she tried to make his transition time easier by having dinner ready when he got home.

After doing several of the projects, you'll have a better understanding of what your husband most enjoys. What makes him feel supported and loved? Some guys will eat up your encouraging words, while others may need a more hands-on approach.

Consider this a research project of the highest importance. As you come to know what makes your husband feel cared for, you'll become more adept at adjusting each project to meet his specific needs.

These projects are designed to help you think outside of the marriage box you've built for yourself out of habit,



You're the only  
expert on your  
husband...  
tailor each project  
to your guy.

traditions, and busyness. They're not designed to box you in. Your Project is going to look very different from your best friend's—you are married to very different guys. We're the Burger King of encouragement programs. You get to do it *your way*.

### 3. Make it manageable.

Maybe you and your husband are over-the-top romantics. Good for you. For the other 98 percent of us, I recommend keeping things manageable. A path of rose petals leading to you posed on a bearskin rug is great—but trying to keep up that level of blessing every night will take a toll on your life (not to mention the rug's life).

Romance like that could be a shock to your marriage system. While it's fine to mix things up once in a while, think about the temperature of your marriage. Think moderation, and kick things up just a notch or two (trade in those sweats you wear to bed for cute, matching jammies) instead of going overboard (a thong to bed may not be very sleep inducing, for either of you).

There's a subtle yet enchanting difference in letting him silently wonder, "Wow, how did I get so lucky to be married to a girl like her?" and shocking him every night with new and wild projects. Keep it simple, and then let him wonder what you're up to.

## Looking for the Good in Your Marriage

Several years ago, during my first marriage, I went through a very rough patch in my life. I was suffering from depression in a big way, gaining huge amounts of weight, wearing black every day (not in a hip, cute way, but more of a one-step-away-from-mourning way), sleeping more and more, and generally just participating in life as little as I could get away with.

One of my good friends, Sara, had a ringside seat to my slow and painful demise. When she would call to ask me to go out for coffee, I would politely decline, stating that I was entirely too busy to be social. Actually, I was consumed with old *Friends* reruns, dreaming about a life in New York where I was a size two and had hip and clever people surrounding me.

Having a schedule to maintain (*Friends* was on four times a day), I skillfully avoided all phone calls and e-mail. That is, until Sara showed up on my doorstep and at her wit's end.

“OK, this is crazy,” she said. “You are harder to get ahold of than a cloistered nun. You’ve *got* to rejoin society.”

I looked at her blankly. “If that requires showering, count me out.”

But Sara was tired of trying to keep my head above water as I kept weighing myself down. She decided to put a plan into action. She gave me a notebook and told me to start a “gratitude journal.” Here were her rules:

1. Write down five things that I was grateful for every day.

2. I was not allowed to put my kids on the list (too easy).
3. I was to read the list to her every day.

I found this project (and Sara) completely annoying and stupid. Did she not see I was depressed? Why couldn't she just leave me alone?

So I did what I believed at the time was the best course of action—I hid. I used caller ID and peeked through the blinds to see who was at the door. I didn't want to practice gratitude. I was fine being miserable, thank you very much.

But Sara persisted and I relented. One day I called her and gave her what was on my list.

*Kathi's List of Gratitude—July 5*

1. There were no rolling blackouts today, so I could dry my hair and watch *Friends*.

"That's it?" Sara said. "For a twenty-four-hour period, all you could come up with is 'There were no rolling blackouts?'"

"Hey, it's a start, isn't it?" It really was all I could manage at the time.

Sara sighed, "OK, I want two tomorrow."

Two? She was doubling my task!

But the next day I came up with two, and by the end of the week, I had my list of five.

As I went through my day, I knew I had to find things I was grateful for. The more practice I had looking for those things, the easier it was to find them.

When I began to write down my gratitudes, my blessings started multiplying before my eyes. Things that used to make me crazy (waiting in line at the store, having to gas up my car) suddenly became little oases of gratitude. Waiting in line offered time to be still for a moment; gassing up my car gave me time to reflect on how grateful I was to have reliable transportation. My circumstances hadn't changed; only the way I looked at those circumstances was different.

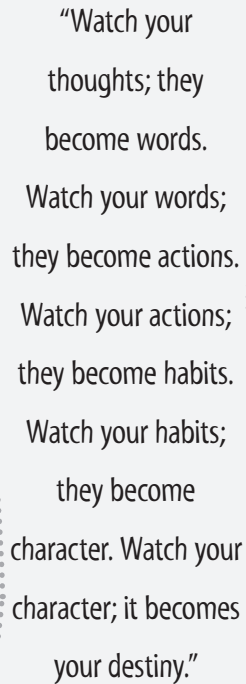
## Our Attitudes Determine Our Actions

In her book, *The Man You Always Wanted Is the One You Already Have*, Paula Friedrichsen discusses how we make the choice to intentionally bless our marriage:

We get to choose how we act. Sometimes we just have to make the choice to act kind and loving regardless of how we feel. In other words, it's okay to act pleasant and joyful even when we don't feel that way. In fact, I contend that if you act pleasant and joyful long enough, you will eventually begin to feel that way...

Our husbands are worthy of consistently kind and respectful treatment, and they will thrive like sunny, well-watered gardens if tended correctly. It's funny...with just a little tender loving care, men will generally respond by doing their very best to meet our needs. If we take our attention off what he's not doing right, and put our attention back where it belongs—on our own behavior—then we will find that the rest takes care of itself.

If you're having a hard time finding motivation to start some of the projects, or are just struggling with loving your husband, why not first try your own gratitude list for the 21 days? Each day, write down five things that you're grateful for when it comes to your husband. It could be tiny (he puts his cup in the dishwasher) or it could be huge (he goes to a job he doesn't love because he wants to provide for our family).



“Watch your thoughts; they become words.  
Watch your words; they become actions.  
Watch your actions; they become habits.  
Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.”

—Author unknown

This is also great preparation for some of the upcoming projects (“You da’ Man: Spreading Great Gossip about Your Guy” and others).

This is where your accountability partners can be a huge help. Hold each other accountable for your lists. Make sure that every day, you’re recognizing all the reasons you married the guy in the first place. And make sure that a few regularly slip out to him so he knows how loved he is.

## But It's Not Fair

Perhaps you've been dragged into The Husband Project by a well-meaning (i.e., pushy) friend. As you read over some of the projects, you begin to get a little uneasy. This doesn't seem like the plan for you. Either it seems weird (*Assignments to love my husband?*) or a little too Susy Homemaker (*Have a hot meal waiting for him when he gets home? I can barely get the can of Spaghettios open.*).

Then, for some wives, the first reaction certainly will be, "Hey, I work hard too! I could use a little time to myself," or "Why do I have to be the one always thinking about him? When is it his turn to think about me?"

I totally get it. I know you work hard. I do too. I bring home the bacon *and* fry it up in a pan. I work full-time, run a household, chauffeur kids to a multitude of activities, belong to a few professional organizations, and volunteer at my church. I have never eaten a bonbon or watched a soap opera in a flower-print housecoat. I truly understand being busy. But I can control only my actions, not my husband's.

After many futile attempts at self-aggrandizement, I've discovered I never seem to get anywhere in the "Hey, It's Not Fair!" game. You know the game. A special deluxe version is handed to each bride after she recites her vows and signs the marriage certificate. The rules are simple (and natural) to follow: Add up everything you do around the house, plus working, then throw a few kids into the mix, and suddenly you're ready to claim the title, Undefeated Champion of "Hey, It's Not Fair!" There are no challengers. They wouldn't dare.

So as I see it, you and I have two choices. One, we can keep playing the game, logging an ever-increasing list of resentments in our head and making ourselves and our husbands miserable. Or two, we can go counterintuitive and live a radical, Christ-like way when it comes

“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.”

—Matthew 20:26-28

to our marriage, putting our husband’s needs before our own (or those of our kids if they’re part of the picture). We can start seeing our choice to serve our husbands not as an edict or some clause in our marital contract, but as an outpouring (or in some cases, a restoring) of our love and adoration for our guys.

### Love and the Hockey Rink

“Scoot over closer. I’ll keep you warm.”

“Thanks for the sacrifice—you’re such a giver,” Roger mumbles with a knowing smile.

Yep, my hubby is onto me.

Whenever we’re sitting together at our son’s hockey game and I start to shiver, I offer to “help” my husband by snuggling up close. He gets the benefit, but so do I. It’s almost always the same in serving others. While others may benefit, we’re the ones who receive the biggest reward.

God instructs us to love and serve our husbands. But, in the process, God wants to do life-changing ministry *in* us. It’s impossible to answer the call of Christ on your life and serve Him without being changed—becoming a little more like Christ as you serve others.



God has great things in store for His girls who are willing to put others in front of themselves. As Paul encourages us, “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9).

And here’s more great encouragement from a pastor’s wife after she started *The Husband Project*:

I received my friend’s call to participate at a perfect time. I was becoming a bit resentful and bitter over my husband’s schedule—he has been very busy with his work and ministry. I have been praying that he would “hear from God” and be willing to change jobs and even change churches, but this project is changing my attitude towards him and his work. I realize that I had become caught up in my daily responsibilities and have failed to be “purposeful in loving and supporting him.” I can say that I am enjoying the work in progress and Hubby has been responsive. He’s been more positive, open, and has even made it home a couple of times in between work and rehearsals. Thanks again.

While it’s obvious that her husband is reaping the benefits of *The Project*, it’s also apparent that the biggest blessing here is the one our friend is receiving—peace about her situation and a new attitude toward her man.

When we lay aside our rights, those things we “deserve” as a wife, this gives our husbands, and our God, a bigger opportunity to bless us.



## Glossary of Terms

### Project

A provided activity by which you'll bless your guy, making him feel special, loved, appreciated, adored, admired, honored, or pampered... and if he's really lucky, all of the above! There are 21 *Projects* in all.

### Project Manager

Head cheerleader for the “make my guy feel great” campaign. That would be you! You're already queen of the house, the proverbial belle of the ball, and now, since you're the one taking charge on each and every project, *you're* the *Project Manager*.

### Accountability Partner

Someone who helps keep your feet to the fire—The Husband Project fire, that is. *Accountability Partners* (two of them) join you in this project to collectively discuss your plans and goals, provide enthusiasm, inspiration, and maybe a little laughter along the way.

### Bonus Projects

Sex. Yep, that's what the *Bonus Projects* are all about. Sex, plain and simple. You'll be finding ways to physically bless your man at least once a week for each of the three weeks. No doubt these projects will be some of your guy's favorites, and hopefully some of yours as well.

### Lingerie

An essential part of any *Project Manager's* tool kit. In the article,

“The Real Woman’s Guide to Lingerie Shopping,” (found in the Tools of The Husband Project section at the back of this book) we give you all the good stuff you need to know to make a splash with a little sex appeal and a lot of self-confidence.

## Guy Food

Recipes we’ve provided (also in the Tools section) so you can bless your guy, regardless of your culinary skills. Think comfort food. Think rich, yummy, ooey-goey, creamy, cheesy, and generally doctor-restricted. You won’t find these dishes on the low-fat, low-carb menus, but you will find them at the top of your husband’s favorite foods list.

## Guy Movies

Manly movie fare recommended by guys I actually know. Movie categories include sports, action, comedy, and, of course, gratuitous violence. Meet your man’s need for speed, greed, and the occasional backhanded deed. As a courtesy, there’s a short list of movies-for-two for you both to enjoy together.

## Project Reports

Some of the earliest *Project Managers* put The Husband Project to the test and gladly shared some of their success stories. Not only are they entertaining to read, but you can find some inspiring ideas too. *Project Reports* are highlighted at the end of each *Project*.

## Getting Creative

Unique, fresh, and specific ideas—just what you need to help you complete each *Project*. Sometimes the hardest part in running the race is getting off the starting block. To help you over this potential hurdle each *Project* features a *Getting Creative* section to get you motivated and mobilized to bless your man.