



On Listening and Other Rare, Exotic Habits

By tuning in to your spouse, the two of you can enjoy more meaningful, rewarding communication than ever before.

by Hans Finzel, Donna Finzel

Any of us who are task-oriented, type A, obsessive-compulsive males especially must learn to slow down and let people into our lives. It may be popular in our hectic paced culture to be a fast-tracker with a full day timer, but we will impact people spiritually and permanently only by careful, deliberate, one-on-one contact. In this age of telecommunications and voice messaging, there is still no substitute for quiet, prolonged exposure of one soul to another. With all the marvels of the Internet and a reach-out-and-touch-someone technology, husband and wife are more in need of quiet and prolonged communication than ever before. The more busy and crazy our lives become, the more communication protects the marriage.

When I [Hans] talk to other men about this common ailment of obsessive behavior, they all seem to have the same problem—that is, their wives don't feel like they take enough time to listen.

Well . . . I [Donna] am going to share a news flash with all you men out there who care to listen up. *Women don't want to hear your advice!* They don't want solutions to their crises. They just want an arm around their shoulders and a soft-spoken, "I understand" (if you do!) or I hear you, and I care about how you're, feeling" (if you don't!).

Women want to:

- see that you care about their interests;
- feel your closeness and love; and
- know you have truly heard them.

In 1 Peter 3, Peter spoke of the responsibilities of husbands and wives. So many times the subject of submission is the focus of teaching from this passage. As I (Donna) studied this passage for teaching last year, I was amazed to learn new meaning in these verses. Verse 7 reads, Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. The words normally translated "weaker vessel" or "weaker partner" can also be translated literally, "feminine one." Our uniqueness as women is clear in this passage. Peter knew that, and he wrote clearly that God commands husbands to:

- be considerate living with your wife,
- treat her with respect,
- understand her unique feminine needs, and
- remember she is your coheir of salvation.

If husbands fail to do those things, Peter said that their prayers would be hindered. That's powerful! If husbands will truly love their wives in this way, we believe their marriages and home life will be revolutionized. Men, if you're reading this, at the top of your list of responsibilities must be "*Find her frequency.*"

I [Donna] see in myself, and other women I have known, a common trait of "responder." Here is what I am saying: *I respond* to Hans. When he is on target with God's commands set forth in Scripture (1 Peter 3 and Eph.- 5) and is seeking to daily care about me in my world as a woman and wife, I will *respond* — that is, I will *naturally* be more what he needs and wants me to be as a companion, friend, and lover. It is true! Here is how he tunes into my frequency (and I'm telling you, I respond when he's tuned in these ways). By his:

- **supporting me** (backing me up in my authority with the kids; appreciating the pressures I face in my own job).
- **respecting what I do** (1) in the home, by joining in the care of the food, clothes, kids, cars, and so on — even the smallest gesture can make a world of difference; and (2) in my work, by recognizing that it has as much value to me as his does to him.
- **giving me warm affection** — physical touch, occasional cards, flowers, and so on . . . even when sex isn't going to

happen.

- **sharing home responsibilities** — taking the initiative to share in everything related to the daily life of a household.
- **listening to me** — asking questions and digging deeper to find out where I am.
- **sharing with me** — allowing me to be close to him by his communication of his world to me.

If men would tune in to these things, I truly believe, they would be *shocked* at the changes in their wives! Their wives will *respond* to them in ways they would never have anticipated or even hoped for. Men, do you really want your wife to be there for you in your greatest needs, including sexual intimacy? Then I challenge you to tune in to hers! Try out this list on a consistent basis. Your wife will be a happier woman. She will be less crabby and irritable (I'm not going to guarantee "never"); and you will hear less complaining from her about her work. Although the weight of her responsibilities may not lessen on a regular basis by the changes you make, she will better be able to cope with and even enjoy her varying roles.

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