

LOVE & RESPECT, The Love She Most Desire; The Respect He Desperately

Needs, Dr. Emerson Eggerichs, Thomas Nelson, 2004. Note: This review pertains to the book only. No opinion is expressed relative to any other facet (i.e. seminars, media, blog, forums, etc.) of the Eggerichs' ministry.

"A wife has one driving need--to feel loved. When that need is met, she is happy. A husband has one driving need--to feel respected. When that need is met, he is happy." "You're on to something huge here." Huge? It's rather shocking that the dual truth of love and respect contained in Ephesians 5:33 could be so 'revolutionary'. And yet, to late 20th and early 21st century Christians, the message is stunning. Why? The answer is complex. Nearly a century of pervasive religious liberalism has brought about a social/identity crisis in both gender and sexuality in Western civilization--e.g., feminism, homosexuality, etc. The role of men as fathers and husbands has been challenged on every level, as the basis for all authority, the Bible, has largely been discounted. Into this void, Dr. Eggerichs brings a very practical message of "love and respect."

Overall, the book might strike some as a bit gimmicky. However, Dr. Eggerichs' goal is to bring relief to widespread troubled marriages from what he calls the "Crazy Cycle,"--a negative feedback loop in which the wife increasingly feels unloved and reciprocally the husband feels disrespected. From there, the author seeks to move the marriage relationship from "bad to good" and from "good to better" by advancing what he calls the "Energizing Cycle." Chapters 8 through 22 explore in detail the love/respect dynamic. Much of the book is given to resurrecting the long-forgotten idea of respecting men. He cites one woman who asked, "What's *that* word again?" I said, 'It's *respect*'. She said, 'Oh, yeah, that's it.'" Unfortunately, Eggerichs anchors much of his advice in the over-emphasized concept of *unconditional* love, as well as a newer emphasis upon *unconditional* respect (p.284).

It is not that the unconditional aspect of love and respect cannot be found in Scripture, but it is important to balance this emphasis with those portions of the Word which speak to *conditionality* and *accountability*. For example, God's love is unconditional in that nothing was required on man's part for the Father to send the Son to die on Calvary's Cross. By grace, He initiates from beginning to end. However, our participation in the benefits of redemption is conditional upon our personal repentance and belief in the truth. God does not save us without some acknowledgement on our part, of being lost sinners. He doesn't restore us to fellowship with Himself without our acknowledgement of specific sins committed. Both the unconditional and conditional aspects must be held in balance. I'm sure the author would agree with the importance of this balance. It is likely the influence of religious liberalism, with its humanistic concepts of God and man, that has created the current emphasis upon *love*, at the expense of God's other attributes, within evangelical circles.

Despite the fact that Part One and Part Two of the book are absolutely chock full of practical wisdom regarding marriage dynamics, Part Three is a disappointment. He writes, "Throughout this book I have emphasized that if the husband and wife are both people of basic goodwill, they can use *Love and Respect* principles to make a bad marriage into a good one and a good marriage into a great one" (underline emphasis mine). But what if this "basic goodwill" doesn't exist with one or the other spouse, or even both? [Note: A whole section, entitled "[Believing in good will](#)"

is devoted to this theological dilemma in the Forum at their website.] What then is his answer? Chapters 23 and 24 introduce readers to several generic concepts of Christian living. First, "Unconditional love and unconditional respect will be rewarded. I call this the Rewarded Cycle" (p.271). Practicing these principles generates "incredible" rewards (The Eternal "Ahhh!" and "Cha-ching!," a celestial slot machine) in heaven and "some of them on earth" (p.272). Second, he briefly touches upon "obedience toward Christ" (p.272) and Lordship (p.276). "The whole point is that you really can't do Love and Respect unless you do it unto Jesus Christ. And if you doubt the reality of Christ, if He is not truly Lord of your life, it won't work." Eggerichs frames the difficulties in marriage as "a test to deepen and demonstrate your love and your reverence for your Lord" (p.280, cf.281). But is that really biblical? Absolutely nothing is ever said regarding God's representative tests of Israel or Calvary's final judgment upon all things Adamic. Apparently, these truths are nonexistent within the author's brand of evangelicalism. For a contrast, obtain and read *The Complete Green Letters*, by the late Miles J. Stanford.

At the end of Chapter 23 and into 24, readers are introduced to the author's concepts of "true inner freedom in Christ" and "spiritual maturity." These subjects are more of an addendum rather than the theme of the book. Central to these is one's ability to practice: unconditional love and respect; respond in a "godly way", not react in a "negative" or "sinful way"; "get rid of the victim mind-set"; be free "if you want to be"; live "independent of your circumstances"; "ask Christ for help"; as well as living with commitment and prayer. While Dr. Eggerichs provides Christian couples with profound insights regarding the vital needs of love and respect in marriage, his advice for Christian living falls fundamentally short and has the historic track record of producing chronic failure. Despite its limitations, I wholeheartedly recommend reading this book.

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