

From Section 3: Delighting in God's People

*"As for the saints who are in the land,
they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight." Psalm 16:3*

Bringing Up Difficulties with Your Husband

Abigail: Wise Peacemaker, Virtuous Woman, and Wife

Ok, so Abigail as David's wife is a bit complicated. I don't fully understand the multiple wives, concubines, etc. of some Old Testament heroes of the faith... and I'm not going to address that here. But, the Lord did bless David by this wise woman's humble yet winsome words to make peace in an inflamed situation to avert further and even greater trouble. (1 Samuel 25) It is these qualities that make her a "delightful" saint and someone for us to emulate as pastors' wives.

Being Winsome, Yet Humble

"Always confident; sometimes right," is a quote my husband says of himself. (One intern class even made him a t-shirt with that printed on it.) If that man of mine has nothing else, it is confidence! Over the years I have learned that not only is he sometimes right, he's FREQUENTLY right. In our marriage. With our kids. With our finances. In the church. There have been many times when the next chapter of our lives would have looked very different had I, rather than him, been the head of our household or pastor of our church. I am so grateful for his wise leadership, fueled by intelligence, bathed in prayer, informed by biblical knowledge, undergirded by an unwavering confidence in the LORD, and buoyed along by an incredible amount of optimism.

But there are times when he's blind and he's clueless to it, or he's wrong and oh, my, he's so convinced that he is right! Over the years I've learned that there are times when my husband really needs me with all humility and winsomeness to dig in my heels and respectfully disagree!

What does that look like? Here you go...

1. Praying ahead of time for openness and words to say. Asking for God to prove preparing both of our hearts for that conversation, making it not a finger-pointing at each other battle, but the shoulder by shoulder let's look out together at the particular issue and come to agreement. And ask God to help both of us see ways the other is right, not just our own position.
2. Spending time actually thinking about how best to word what I want to say and spend time thinking about things I appreciate about my husband and his leadership. A heart full of gratitude is the best springboard for word of questioning. And, a heart full of gratitude sets my attitude in the correct posture for bringing up the word of questioning.
3. Waiting for a good moment, so probably not just as soon as he comes in the door and is tired from a long day.
4. Voicing my true appreciation for his leadership, even with specific examples of similar situations where his good leadership has blessed our family/the church so much. The idea is for the topic I'm going to be brought up not to look like a general slam against his leadership, which I do not intend it to be. My husband is a superb leader!
5. Bringing up the particular area of disagreement, stating his perspective as knowledgeably and charitably as I can; Inserting my view of the situation.

6. Talking together about our differences in perspective as well as the goals that we have in common. Discern where we agree already and how we can come to unity where we disagree. And, if it's not a matter of a difference in philosophy, but perhaps practically working out what we both agree upon, then it's talking about how we can get to a better application.
7. Praying together. Sometimes even just praying together helps as we voice up to God, in the earshot of each other, our differences and as God to knit us together into unity.
8. If we can't come to agreement, it's thinking about what we could read together or someone who we both respect and who knows us who could help us think through this better.
9. Taking time to thank him for listening to my opinion and appreciating his leadership again.

An Example

One example of a conversation like this that we've had together has been getting right the balance between sermon prep on Saturdays – one of Mark's key days for this – and being present at the kids sports activities when they were growing up. Different pastors "cook" their sermons in different times of the different ways. Some men can do their sermon prep early in the week and be good with that. My husband has always been a Friday and Saturday sermon prep kind of guy. Saturday he is in the thick of his heaviest thinking and writing. He is extremely distracted!

When other men ask him about sermon prep times, he admits he's a Friday and Saturday kind of guy and he urges them not to be Friday and Saturday guys themselves for the sake of their families. Now that the kids are out of the house it's easy for him just to prep all day Saturday. Empty nesters can go on dates most any night of the week they want to! Friday nights and Saturdays do not take on the same special value as they did when our kids were in the home. The tug kept coming for us when our kids didn't just want any parent at their event on Saturday, but they wanted their father there at an event on Saturday.

This tug between his work on the sermons and the kids Saturday events was one of the times when I had to go to him and help him see how much they wanted him there and help them think through way that he could do both sermon prep and be there for them. I can't say we ever really got it right like a once-and-done sort of thing.

There were multiple conversations on this. Not nagging kind of conversations. But multiple conversations, nonetheless. But because I knew that it wasn't that he didn't want to be there for his kids, but that this was when he wrote his sermons, that helped me have a sympathetic tone to my voice as I brought this up. And, it made me truly appreciate ways he did set aside his sermon even on Saturdays in order to be there for them.

When he did do this, I tried to make sure to remember to encourage him about what a difference it made for the kids for him to take time out of his sermon prep to be there for them. I think probably looking back, he wishes he had done a lot more than he had. Just like when I look back, I can see so many things I wish I had done differently or better. Good thing that asking forgiveness is an option. There have been many things that Mark and I both have had to apologize to our kids about. And now that they are grown and have kids of their own, I think they get it more than ever. This parenting stuff sure is difficult!

QUESTIONS FOR YOU

1. How do you avoid nagging about issues that regularly come up with your husband?
2. Are there areas where you have helped your husband through humble, yet winsome conversation?
3. Have you seen God bless this approach towards your husband?
4. Any other words of advice to wives trying to grow their ability to be winsome, yet humble?