

# **RIGHT or WRONG? A spouse's etiquette**

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**My husband and I said the traditional vows in our wedding a few months ago. The richer/poorer and sickness/health parts have been easy enough to deal with. However, my husband's table manners and social etiquette have deteriorated since we dated. I don't want these things to become a wedge. What can I do?**

During the first few months of marriage, we often come face-to-face with the realities of our own expectations about what a spouse is supposed to look like. Our expectations can be reinforced by the especially nice version of one another we see while dating. The major difficulty often arises because these expectations are unexpressed, unwritten, unspoken and even unidentified until our spouse fails to meet them.

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Then you're faced with a dilemma. On the one hand, you love and care for this person. You say to yourself, "This is such a small, insignificant, little part of our lives. I really should not be bothered by \_\_\_\_\_ (insert spouse's current faux pas)." You begin repeating to yourself Scriptures like 1

Corinthians 13:7, “Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” You tell yourself you do not want to be that nagging wife of Proverbs 19:13, who is like a constantly dripping faucet.

On the other hand, you say to yourself—usually after a few days of trying to ignore the spousal blunder, “Hey, I thought husbands were supposed to love their wives as their own body, and I thought we vowed to respect and honor one another.” You say to yourself, “It’s not nagging; I’m just protecting him.”

Sound familiar? What do you do? Reassess your own attitude. Ask yourself if you are being unrealistic or unmoving in your own expectations. Consider your own motives. Why does this matter to you? I am a table etiquette fanatic and a neat-freak, but I have realized my husband is not trying to spite me when his etiquette slips or he leaves his socks on the floor. Sometimes, we have to choose to love, even when things are not exactly as we expected. Remind yourself there are greater issues at stake in a great marriage than whether or not he opens your door, or even—as much as it may pain you—burps at the table.

If you really must bring up this particular issue, talk to your spouse when you are not angry. Rather than beginning the conversation with all the things you want him to change, try to express how you feel. Don’t necessarily expect anything to change. Express to your husband that you want to feel heard, and when you have been, let it go.

Little things often become wedges when we are not honest or when we expect others to be just like us. Frequently, I find that reassessing my own expectations and purifying my own heart are much more effective at removing the wedge than trying to “fix” my husband.

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