

## Pastor's Corner, 8-4-2018 – Making Marriage Work: Accepting Influence

We all know that men and women are different (it's probably because of that whole Mars and Venus thing). These differences are especially pronounced when it comes to accepting influence from your partner in marriage. Today's principle for making marriage work states that healthy marriages are ones where both the wife and the husband are able to accept influence and input from their spouse. Of all the principles, this is the one that seems to be most skewed by gender differences.

One way to look at this principle is to ask yourself, "who wears the pants", in your family? Historically (and the further back you go the more true this was) men were the ones who "wore the pants." The phrase itself implies and assumes a patriarchal mindset. I'm sure the phrase was coined in a time when women primarily wore dresses or skirts and men were the only ones to wear pants. To suggest that the wife was the one wearing the pants in the family would be to imply that the man had somehow been emasculated. Some guys still have this opinion and freak out when it is suggested that their wife should have an equal say in things.

In those days gone by it wasn't at all uncommon for the man to be the primary bread winner while the Mrs. stayed home to take care of the kids, clean the house, and cook the food. In that stereotypical *Leave it to Beaver* world Ward would call the shots. He would make big decisions on his own and inform June about them later. Back in the day it was considered normal for the husband to man the helm of USS Family all by himself. His wife was probably in charge of the kids, but even then, when Dad came home the power structure would change (just wait till your Father get's home!).

Today, of course, this dynamic has changed quite a bit. Women, to a large degree, have entered the work force. There is a much greater sense of equality among the sexes than there was in those olden days. This also means that husbands are slowly learning to accept (and seek out) input from their wife. Research has shown that the happiest marriages are ones where neither husband nor wife truly "wears the pants," but rather they are a team where both is open to accepting the influence of the other.

The underlying idea beneath accepting influence is one of honor and respect. Honor and respect absolutely have to be present if your marriage is going to stand the test of time and one way we can convey those values to our spouse is by discussing things together, making decisions together, and finding compromise based on one another's input. In other words, accept each other's influence.

I mentioned that men and women are different in this area and studies have shown that men are overwhelmingly less likely to accept influence from women than the other way around. In other words, women are generally much better at this than us guys are. I think most of us recognize that men and women approach relationships differently. Women can get together and spend hours getting caught up on everything happening in their friend's lives. Men would be perfectly content to sit in front of a tv watching a football game where the greatest expression of relationship might be when someone says something like, "hey, I'm going to grab some more Doritos, you guys need anything?"

Women tend to prioritize relationships more than men do and they tend to be better at maintaining them as well. Which makes sense, they've had a lot more practice. Even from a very young age, girls emphasize relationship and community in the way they play. When boys play they want to focus on the game or activity itself. Games with boys quickly develop into a win/lose kind of situation. When it comes to relationships (and especially arguments) there is no win/lose option. It's either win/win or lose/lose. This is relationship 101 – good relationships require dialogue, compromise, and sharing of ideas and power.

Another difference between boys and girls is how they accept influence from the opposite gender. Studies have even showed that even at very young ages (3-5 yrs old) boys tend to accept input only from other boys, whereas girls are open to accepting the influence of both boys and girls. Boys and girls will often play together when they are younger but sometime around six or seven years of age, the

girls get sick of this situation and stop playing with boys. The two genders won't meet again until puberty thrusts them back together.

All this is to say that us guys have to be intentional about this one. We have to make sure that we are taking our spouses feelings, ideas, and perspective into consideration. Marriage is about teamwork and cooperation. Neither the husband nor the wife should be the dictator of the family. The happiest marriages are the ones where the pants are shared and honor and respect flow in both directions. For us guys, one of the most effective phrases we can learn is, "yes dear."

Happy Sabbath,  
Pastor Tyler