

QUESTION: What do you do about feelings or lack of feelings of love for your spouse, whether or not you're separated?

ANSWER: We should never rely on our feelings and emotions. God **COMMANDS** husbands to love their wives, and **COMMANDS** wives to love and respect their husbands. The kind of love we are commanded to have as Christians (*agape love*), **the love described in I Corinthians 13, is not based on feelings**, but rather comes from the Holy Spirit dwelling in us (Romans 5:5). The Bible tells us that we are made up of spirit, soul and body (I Thess. 5:23). The **SOUL** is made up of mind, will and **EMOTIONS**. The "natural man" is governed **ONLY** by his soul and bodily appetites, because he is spiritually dead (I Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1-5). You, as a born-again Christian, are to be governed and **CONTROLLED by the Holy Spirit** and your own born-again spirit, which is created in the image of God, **NOT** by your **SOUL** (Eph. 4:17-24). **Your soul, which includes your emotions, is UNRELIABLE, and you must not trust it.** You **MUST** renew your mind with the word of God (Romans 12:2; Eph. 4:23) and you are **RESPONSIBLE** (using your **FREE WILL**) to be careful of what you put before your eyes and ears and allow to enter your mind, because that will **AFFECT** your **EMOTIONS** (see Phil. 4:6-9). If you find that your **MIND** (thoughts) or **EMOTIONS** are **OUT of LINE with what God says in His word**, you **MUST NOT** allow your **SOUL** to be the final authority. God's word must be the final authority, and **we are told to "take EVERY THOUGHT captive to the OBEDIENCE of Christ"** (II Cor. 10:3-5), which means you must deal with your thought-life and emotions, rather than **ALLOWING them to RULE you.**

You must refuse to live by your feelings - your feelings and emotions ("heart" in the Bible) are highly unreliable. However, God is faithful, and if you make a decision to love your husband or wife with God's kind of love, and ask the Holy Spirit to pour it out in your heart, and you **ACT** in loving ways toward your spouse, the "feeling" of love will eventually come.

- **Jeremiah 17:9-10** "The **HEART** is more deceitful than anything else, and desperately sick; who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart, I test the mind....."
- **Ephesians 5:25-26** "**Husbands, LOVE your wives, just as Christ also LOVED the church** and gave Himself for it....."
- **Ephesians 5:28-29** "So husbands ought to **love their own wives as their own bodies**; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church."
- **I Peter 3:7** "Likewise you husbands, dwell with [*your wives*] **with understanding**, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker (more fragile) vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered."
- **Ephesians 5:33** "Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so **LOVE his own wife** as himself, and let the wife see that she **RESPECTS her husband.**"

The wife is commanded to respect her husband, and the husband is commanded to be understanding and kind with his wife, who may be more fragile emotionally. Just as the wife desires for her husband to love her and show that love, the husband needs to have his wife's respect, and she needs to **SHOW** him her respect. If he feels he is not being respected for who he is, **he will most likely withdraw and not show love for his wife.** If the wife feels her husband is not showing love to her, she will tend to disrespect him. Sounds like the makings of a lot of miscommunication and arguments, hurt feelings, and the like, doesn't it? Let your spouse know what's bothering you. Don't keep resentments bottled up inside you until they come boiling out in anger, or get pressed down into depression. You must be constantly vigilant and on your guard against Satan, your enemy, who likes nothing better than to tear apart Christian marriages.

You must **keep God's word in your HEART** as well as your mind, which means **HOW you think affects your EMOTIONS.** You must keep God's word in the midst of your heart,

and **"keep" or guard and WATCH OVER your HEART** with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. The quality of your life, of your marriage, and ALL your "issues of life" depends on you guarding your heart. This "guarding your heart" and controlling your emotions is similar to the **"take heed to your spirit"** in Malachi 2. Keep your focus on obeying God, and on the "noble, just, pure, lovely" and other good qualities of your spouse, rather than dwelling on their failures and shortcomings. Dwelling on the negative opens the way for Satan (Ephesians 4:26-27) and for a "root of bitterness" to be formed.

- **Proverbs 4:20-23** "My son, give attention to **My WORDS**;do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them **in the midst of YOUR HEART**; for they are LIFE to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. **Keep** (guard, watch over) **your HEART with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.**"
- **Philippians 4:6-9** ".....**guard your HEARTS and MINDS** through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are **true**, whatever things are **noble**, whatever things are **just**, whatever things are **pure**, whatever things are **lovely**, whatever things are **of good report**, if there is any **virtue** and if there is any **PRAISE - meditate on these things**. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, **these DO**, and the God of PEACE will be with you."
- **Philippians 2:5** "**Let this MIND be in YOU** which was also in Christ Jesus."
- **Ephesians 4:23-24** "And **be RENEWED in the spirit of your MIND**; and that you put on the NEW MAN, which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness."
- **Romans 12:2** "And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the **RENEWING of your MIND**, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."