

You can give your wife the gift of unconditional acceptance
the Bible calls *The Blessing*.



From the
best-selling
co-author of
The Blessing

30 WAYS A HUSBAND CAN BLESS HIS WIFE

JOHN TRENT, PH.D.
Co-author of *The Blessing* — over one million sold!

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A pair of hands is shown holding a small, white, shallow bowl. The bowl has a faint, butterfly-shaped pattern on its surface. The hands are positioned as if they are carefully holding or presenting the bowl. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

THE VALUE OF LITTLE CHOICES

THERE ARE LOTS of choices we make each day that really aren't that significant. Turkey sandwich or ham. Soup or salad. Try to get around traffic or sit it out in the lane we're in and tough it out. Watch the late summary on ESPN or head to bed and get some extra sleep. Those choices have minimal impact on our life today or our future tomorrow.

But there are choices that can make a real difference in our life today and tomorrow. Like the choice to be a man who looks to God's Word to be the moral compass of his life, instead of just emotionally flipping a coin or going with our gut feeling or

polling our friends to find out what they think. Like choosing to follow Jesus each day. Like choosing, with God's help and Spirit, to be a better man today than we were yesterday. Like choosing to perform small actions that can be an incredibly powerful tool for adding love and life to your marriage as a whole and to your wife's life and future in particular.

Those are the kinds of choices we make each day that really *can* make a *real* difference in who we

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are today and the man we'll be tomorrow. As the great scholar and Christian C. S. Lewis wrote in his book *Mere Christianity*, "Remember, we Christians think man lives forever. Therefore, what really matters are

those little markers or twists on the central, inside part of the soul, which are going to turn it, in the long run, into a healthy or hellish creature."

It is indeed those little things we choose to do in our spiritual and personal life—including the way

we treat our wife at home when no one but our God and our children are watching—that will set our course for future actions and a healthy relationship. Those small choices—which is what this book is all about—are bound up in what C. S. Lewis called “one of the great secrets”:

When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him. . . . Good and evil both increase at compound interest. That is why the little decisions you and I make every day are of such infinite importance. The smallest good act today is the capture of a strategic point from which, a few months later, you may be able to go on to victories you never dreamed of. An apparently trivial indulgence in lust or anger today is the loss of a ridge or railway line or bridgehead from which the enemy may launch an attack otherwise impossible.

The incredible power of little choices is absolutely true for both our faith and our life. And guess where our faith gets lived out first and last.

It’s in our home where we live out our faith, and where those small choices add up to shape our soul—and our marriage. That just makes sense.

Most of us don't start our day at church (unless we live in a parsonage). We may regularly go to

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church. But it is in our home, where we have the most important earthly relationships, that the rubber meets the road. That's where you and I will make choices and live out the corresponding actions of those choices. Where

we will either move closer to our spouse or further away. Where we will choose to have a good attitude or a poor one. Where we will choose to move towards God's best or away from it.



WHAT THE BLESSING IS

THE BLESSING IS about unconditional love and acceptance of a person. It is about

- ➔ seeing the potential in someone,
- ➔ assigning great value to that person,
- ➔ reaching out with meaningful touch,
- ➔ speaking words of blessing over them, and
- ➔ demonstrating an active commitment to that person.

The blessing is for *all* relationships. Here we'll focus on specific ways that a husband can bless his wife. The relationship between husband and wife is one that is revered in Scripture. Husbands and wives are both instructed to put effort into their relationship. Marriage is to be protected and honored by those who believe in Jesus Christ, and it provides a picture of the sacrificial relationship between Jesus and his bride, the church.

The influence of a husband upon his wife is phenomenal. Will you be the kind of husband who builds up his wife and encourages her to be all that God created her to be?

I am so grateful to have an excellent wife. Cindy is my best friend, and she has stuck with me through thick, thin, and thinner. While neither of us grew up in a Christian home, we both were committed to establishing our marriage with Christ at the center and raising our family around the truth that Jesus is more precious than anything. Cindy has been a voice of wisdom for me through many career and personal decisions, and I would not be where I am today without her continual encouragement and support. Cindy believes in the blessing, and we have

actively given each other the blessing throughout the years of our relationship.

Having someone in our lives who believes in us and walks with us through life's challenges while cheering us on to be all that God created us to be can inspire us to pursue more than we might think is possible. I hope that your wife is that person for you and that you are that person for your wife.

A Culture of Blessing

Of course, the act of a husband's giving of the blessing isn't just reserved for a once-in-a-lifetime momentous occasion. You can bless your wife in small ways every day! In fact, it's all these small, specific, positive ways you'll learn about that can help you as a husband create what we call a culture of blessing in your home!

Think about a culture like setting a thermostat in your home. Try living in Chicago in February and setting the thermostat at 20 degrees throughout the house. No matter where you go in that home, the atmosphere, or culture, communicates one thing: it's cold! Your whole focus isn't on relating to others or being free to do things inside; your focus is on getting

warm! But now set the thermostat at 72 degrees and watch life warm up and the focus of your family go from what's missing (heat) to all the things you *can do* as a family! You've added life (movement) to the home, because you've changed the thermostat (or culture)! And when you create a culture of blessing in the home, the entire family benefits. You all have the freedom to move towards God's best!

The Five Essential Elements

Let's get more specific about just what makes up the blessing. You'll see these elements pop up in the suggestions and examples that follow.

Throughout Scripture, five distinct elements usually characterized the blessing. First, the blessing began with a *meaningful touch*. The blessing continued with a *spoken message*, meaning the blessing was said or written out, so it was unmistakable. The third element of the blessing was how the words always expressed *high value*. Fourth, the giver of the blessing pictured a *special future* for the one being blessed. And then these four attitudes and actions were lived out and demonstrated through an *active commitment* to see the blessing come to pass in that person's life.

Each of these five elements contributes its own impact on your blessing.

Meaningful Touch (Lovingly Touch)

A *meaningful touch* was an important part of giving the blessing in the Old Testament. When Isaac blessed his son, he called him, saying, “Come near and kiss me, my son” (Genesis 27:26, ESV). Isaac’s words “come near” actually translate as “come and embrace in a bear hug.” Jesus blessed the little children who came to him, “[taking] them in his arms and . . . laying his hands on them” (Mark 10:16, ESV). The benefits of touch are enormous—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. In marriage, meaningful touch is a primary means of communicating intimacy.

Research has shown, time and again, the incredible benefits of touch. For example, premature babies who are touched and held gain weight dramatically faster than those who aren’t. (Touch isn’t the reason why you or your wife has gained weight. Those studies on weight gain and touch only work with babies!) When someone puts their hands on another’s shoulders—like you giving your wife a

back rub—her blood pressure will go down (even if yours doesn't!). Touch has many physical benefits, but perhaps most important, without a word being spoken, your touch is an incredibly powerful way to say, “I love you. I care for you.”

Spoken Message (Say It!)

A *spoken message* has the power to build up or tear down a person's sense of worth. Our words hold great power, and the blessing acknowledges this through the spoken message. In the Bible, a blessing was invalid unless it was spoken. In the book of James, we see multiple pictures of the power of the tongue. The tongue is described as a bit that gives direction to a horse, a rudder that turns a ship, and a spreading fire (James 3:1–6). Each of these pictures shows us the potential of the tongue to build up or tear down. Will your tongue be one that encourages or belittles your wife? The apostle Paul challenged the church of Ephesus with these words: “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear” (Ephesians 4:29, ESV). Let your spoken words to your wife be

words of blessing so that she may experience grace.

I remember one of my mentors, Dr. Howards Hendricks, once telling me about a counseling session he had that he never forgot. He had been trying to encourage a husband to be more verbally affirming with his wife. When the doctor challenged the husband about the fact that he had never once said “I love you” to his wife since they got married over thirty years before, the man thundered at him from across the room, “I told my wife I loved her on the day we were married and it stands until I revoke it!”

That statement is wrong on so many levels! Just listen to the pride and anger dripping from those words. And the fact that at any time, his one-time statement could be withdrawn? Revoked? That man might have felt that his love still echoed after thirty plus years, but he was dead wrong. When you really

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love someone—even if you grew up not often hearing that love as a child or seeing your parents use loving words to encourage each other—you need to say it!

In the Scriptures, the word *love* occurs well over three hundred times, and in fact, the Bible says that “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). In the Gospel of John, we’re told that “the Word [love] became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, ESV). God didn’t express his love just once. He sent his Son to embody his word, so

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we couldn’t miss it! Just think about the fact that the only time the heavenly Father speaks to his Son on earth (at the baptism of Jesus and again at the Transfiguration), he says, “This is my

beloved Son” (Matthew 3:17; 17:5). *Beloved!*

If anyone says to you, “Well, don’t praise your wife or kids too much, because they’ll get a swelled head,” tell them this: The world is going to tell your

wife and your kids in a hundred different ways that they're worthless and have no value. People who feel loved are happier and they make better decisions. It's best to praise your wife (or child) for persistence and their ability to stick with a difficult task, rather than intellect. Complementing their effort in the face of challenges is always a good. In fact, scientists have shown that applauding time, perseverance and courage is better than praising intellect, attractiveness, or talent.

Husband, praising your wife works wonders—so say it!

In the book Song of Solomon, King Solomon's bride began their relationship feeling incredibly insecure and unworthy, particularly because while Solomon had none other than King David as his father and had been raised in a palace, her father apparently was gone and her brothers had forced her to work in the fields (Song of Solomon 1:5–6).

She feels so down about herself that as the book begins, she says to her husband-to-be, “Do not gaze at me” (Song of Solomon 1:6, *ESV*). She feels so unworthy, so worthless, she can't even fathom what