

***Love and Respect***

Emerson Eggerichs, PhD

*Love and Respect* by Emerson Eggerichs is a Christian marriage improvement book which focuses on addressing unmet needs and common negative interaction patterns that occur in many intimate relationships with what Eggerichs calls the “Love and Respect Connection” theory. The author’s central theme focuses primarily on his interpretation and application of Ephesians 5:33 - “However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.” In *Love and Respect*, Emerson Eggerichs, presents Ephesians 5:33 as an encouragement to consider innate differences between men and women focusing on their attitudes towards and preferences for love and respect in their marriage relationships as well as differences in their typical expectations and needs in their marriage relationships.

Dr. Eggerichs proposes a framework of three cycles to understand couples’ behavior – the Crazy Cycle, Energizing Cycle, and Rewarded Cycle. The Crazy Cycle is described as unloving behavior by husbands leads to disrespectful behavior by wives and vice versa. The Energizing Cycle is a reversal of the Crazy Cycle; a husband’s love is motivating a wife’s respect and a wife’s respect is motivating a husband’s love. The Rewarded Cycle is described as engaging in loving and respectful behaviors out of obedience to and trust in God that He will reward and bless your efforts, regardless of your partner’s actions. The author provided numerous scriptural passages in his descriptions and support of the relationship cycles as well as energizing cycle strategies. Eggerichs additionally references some research to supplement his points, primarily in the form of survey responses and citation of a few findings from John Gottman’s research on marriage relationships. However, the author relies heavily on testimonial examples, stories, and metaphors to bolster points made which distract from the main points being expressed and create needless text when a more concise message would be sufficient and possibly more effective.

Eggerichs also suggests specific strategies for engaging in loving and respectful behavior based on his ideas about differences between men and women’s underlying desires and needs. He organizes these suggested strategies into acronyms for each role - COUPLE for women’s needs to be addressed by men, CHAIRS for men’s needs to be addressed by women.

The suggestions presented are tangible and concrete, making application accessible and direct. The cycles themselves are described in a simple and easily understood manner. The overall message of the book presents a sound principle about the importance of understanding personal differences in relationships, prioritizing service to one’s spouse’s unique needs and desires, and encouraging responsibility and accountability in the initiation of changing one’s own behavior to improve the marital dynamics.

The author does make unreferenced broad assumptions about the thinking and behavior of men and women which might lead some readers to struggle with application. He also does not address or make robust clarification about more complicated and nuanced circumstances often present in marriages such as domestic violence situations, substance abuse, or trauma and how these situations would change or alter a reader’s application of the Love and Respect approach.

However, the most concerning omission of the book, is the absence of any meaningful discussion about a Christian’s gospel motivation. In Eggerichs’ discussion of the Rewarded Cycle he talks about God’s promises to reward those who are obedient, but he doesn’t spend much time talking about a Christian’s ultimate motivation for doing anything “good” which is our gratitude, thankfulness, and appreciation for the gift of salvation that was won for us by Jesus’ obedience, death, and resurrection. The positive message and useful information and suggestions would have been much more impactful if they had been rooted first and foremost in a presentation of the most important motivation for improving your marriage - out of love for God, from whom we have already received the fullest measure of love.

For individuals looking for a general marriage enrichment book, Love and Respect provides an accessible core message with tangible principles they can practice and apply. However, if you are someone looking for a more in-depth and robust exploration of the interplay between biblical truth, psychological motivation, personality differences and marriage research you might find yourself looking for more and in need of supplemental resources.