

HOPE Worksheet

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” (Eph. 5:31)

As we talked about in *A Wife's Secret to Happiness* chapter two, unity in marriage is an ongoing process, and requires intentional choices as we seek to maintain health in our relationships.

Use the worksheet below to help inform your leaving and cleaving process, and to encourage you if things become difficult along the way. Carry *HOPE* for the unity God wants to provide to your marriage. His arms are not too short.

Step #1: Honor

Definition: to regard with respect; esteem

Holding fast to your husband doesn't mean dishonoring your parents. Married life means adjusting our connections, not cutting off all communication with our families. Speak well of them. Be intentional in how you continue your family relationships, and forgive past grievances so your husband won't inherit those wounds.

The concept of honor also comes into play if we default to preferring mom or dad over our spouse, thus, dishonoring our men by diminishing the value of their voice, perspective, or presence in our lives.

Brainstorm tangible ways to demonstrate love and honor to the parental figures in your life. For example: phone calls, gifts of appreciation, gratitude.



Now brainstorm practical ways to demonstrate love and honor to your husband. *For example: acts of consideration, gifts, quality time, and physical touch.*

Consider recent conversations you've had with family or friends about your spouse, and conversations with your spouse regarding your loved ones. Were your words honoring or dishonoring? What healthier choices can you make in the future?

How can your actions demonstrate that you value your man's voice, perspective, and presence when you're in the company of others?

Step #2: Overcoming Conflict

Don't tattle on your husband, especially to your family. The negative things you share in the heat of an emotional moment may cause permanent damage to their relationship with your mate. Your parents will always want what is best for you, and it's possible their feedback will also hinder conflict resolution. Imagine if your mom's voice echoed in your head every time you argued with your man: *You deserve better. . . . He's the one at fault. . . . I hate to see you so unhappy.* Seek unbiased counsel as needed. One-sided allies won't do any good for you or your marriage.

Do you share details of spousal disagreements with friends or family? If so, select the words below that describe your motivation for sharing:

Validation

Prayer

Empathy

Counsel

Justification

Venting

In hindsight, does the feedback you receive aid in resolving the problem?


List out a few of your go to confidants when you're arguing with your mate.

Now circle the names of those who give unbiased feedback and constructive support based on God's Word. These are the people you want to get into a habit of talking with when you need counsel. Are there any other names not already on your list that could qualify as good sounding boards if you can't seem to resolve a problem?

Step #3: Priorities


Leaving your parents and fastening yourself to your husband means he is your new priority. Your loyalty belongs to one another. Discuss the new traditions you want in your life together. This includes holidays, church membership, and any other traditions once enjoyed by your individual families. Leaving and cleaving doesn't mean you need to move to another state, or that you can't go to Grandpa's house for Christmas.

Establish a new home as husband and wife with your new family unit as the priority. Children are instructed to obey their parents. Now married, we are still called to honor but not to obey mom and dad. It's not dishonorable to hear Dad's recommendations and choose otherwise. Receive wisdom and make choices in line with God's direction and priorities. Your parents may not understand your decisions, and that's OK; the path you forge as a new family unit takes precedence.



You and your spouse are your immediate family unit—your kids, too, if you have them. Think about the family traditions you each grew up with and list them below if those same traditions are duplicated in your lives as a married couple. For example, do you attend the same church you grew up in? Attend family meals every Sunday? Uphold the same sports rituals or scheduling routines? Celebrate holidays in a similar way?

Were any of these traditions rolled into your married life automatically, doing the things you've always done because you've always done them? If so, which ones?



Do any of these traditions demonstrate that your extended family unit is a greater priority to you than your immediate family unit? For example, do you drive to four houses on Christmas Day so everyone else feels loved but your immediate family unit ends up fatigued and overwhelmed? Is your family home church still the ideal home fellowship for your new family unit?

What habits may be helpful for you to re-assess with your husband to safeguard and cherish your immediate family unit as the priority?

Step #4: Economics

You haven't left home if your parents bankroll your lifestyle. Living like adults means living within our means, and we can't get upset if our parents still treat us like children while they're doing our laundry and paying our cell phone bills. Allowing your folks to subsidize your income may seem convenient, but this dependence throws your relationships off-balance.



Do your parents—or your parents-in-law—subsidize your income on an ongoing basis?

If so, how does this habit alter the balance and boundaries of your relationship?

Talk with God and your husband about how best to handle your current circumstances. Discuss possible healthy ways to leave your parents and cleave to one another, especially if your current season leaves you dependent on your folks financially.

Be encouraged if this worksheet gives you lots of unanswered questions to consider—that's the intent. Use these categories to consider and adjust your perspective about your marriage as you continue to adhere yourself to your husband in your heart. Talk with him about the observations you've made and take *HOPE*.

God has good plans for your relationship and wants to increase your unity.