



**Dear Dave,**

When your mother and I got married, we used the standard vows right out of the book. I did not even know what my promises would be until the priest read them to me at the rehearsal. Just in case you have not read ahead, they go like this:

"I, David, take you, Lisa, to be my wife. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life."

No trick phrases. No hidden clauses. These vows are simple enough for Forrest Gump.

"I take you to be my wife," is a very vague job description. Who will cook? Who will clean? Fix the car? Mow the lawn? Change the diapers? Different couples work it out different ways. It is not about who does what. The important thing is with whom you do it.

In the Song of Songs, the groom says, "There are sixty queens, eighty concubines, and maidens without number. One alone is my dove, my perfect one." (Songs 6:8-9) There are beauty queens, video stars, and girls everywhere you look. This vow says, "Of all the girls, in all the world, you are the one for me. I take you" "I promise to be true." No cheating. No fooling around. Enough said.

"I will love you." Do not confuse romance with love. Romance is an unreliable feeling that incites romantic notions such as, "I will climb the highest mountain for you. I will fight dragons for you. I will die for you." Real life poses a different challenge:

You are sitting on the couch, watching TV, and go looking for a snack during a commercial. You find some apples in the refrigerator and pick out a good one. Then you call, "Lisa, do you want an apple?" "Sure, Dave. Thanks." But there is no second apple that looks good. Heading back to the couch, you ponder which apple to give her. Romance says, "I will die for you." Real life asks, "Are you going to give her the good apple?" Love says, "Yes, give her the best."

"I will honor you." This was the surprise vow for me. I did not expect to make a promise to honor her. But I gave it a try, and it worked out well. I stopped teasing her and made it a habit to defend her and take her side when friends or family wanted to pick on her.

Honor is the most unappreciated vow. Some husbands make jokes about their wives, with little put-downs that are supposed to be funny. These are bad jokes. They cut, they wound, and they destroy trust. A marriage can die the death of a thousand tiny cuts. Avoid negative humor. It is not funny.

Honor is about respect. Treat her like a queen. Make your children respect their mother. Don't let anyone put her down. She is your lady, and your lady always gets treated with respect.

God bless you, Dave.

Love,

Dad