

The
Husband
Project

Kathi Lipp



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Why The Husband Project?

“Kathi, a couple of us need to quit the project.”

I couldn’t believe what Angela was saying. Quit The Husband Project? We’d just started that weekend.

“Ange, are you kidding me? Why do you want to quit already?”

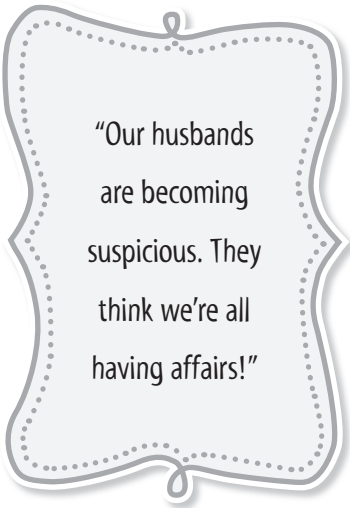
“I was talking to some of the other girls, and because we’re being so nice, our husbands are becoming suspicious. They think we’re all having affairs!”

Apparently, there’s a bigger need for The Husband Project than even I could have expected.

The Beginning of The Husband Project

At my busy church in San Jose, California, I serve in a variety of roles. Some of the roles I have played have been on the programming team with my husband, Roger (who is the director of the Worship Arts Ministry), leading Bible studies and small groups and taking meals to people who are sick or having babies. But my favorite role by far is mentoring women.

The girls I mentor are smart, funny, and committed to serving God. They really are amazing. However, like most wives I know, they have a tendency to “share” about their husbands.



“Our husbands are becoming suspicious. They think we’re all having affairs!”

“He’s never home. I feel like I’m single—but with an extra person to clean up after.”

“Why is it when he’s watching our kids it’s *babysitting*?”

“We used to be romantic, but now our idea of romance is reading take-out menus together.”

The “sharing” started to concern me. I wasn’t judging these girls, trust me. I found myself slipping every once in a while, saying something “endearing” about my husband while rolling my eyes.

A Change in Perspective

I know the importance of loving and honoring my husband, and like every other lesson in my life, I learned it the hard way. (Why can’t I ever learn things while eating chocolates and shopping?)

I married in my early twenties, and two babies came along shortly after the marriage vows. In retrospect, I can see that as soon as I discovered the wonders of a Diaper Genie, my concentration shifted from my husband to the day-to-day care of my kids. With a full-time job thrown in, the goal of making my husband feel special dropped way down on my priority list.

After a painful marriage and divorce, I am now remarried to an amazing guy. When new friends meet him they say, “Oh, so this is Prince Charming!” He’s a great father and stepdad, and he loves me and his God and indulges my passion for fat-free coconut yogurt on a regular basis. I really couldn’t ask for a better guy.

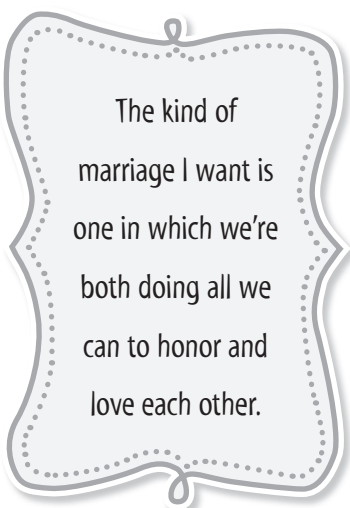
And yet, like a great pair of comfortable flip-flops, he’s sometimes easy to take for granted. He’s always there—not demanding anything of me. He can fix his own frozen pizza when I’m too busy to cook, and he can even wash his own socks in a pinch. When work deadlines loom and kids have dozens of activities, I sometimes let my relationship with Rog fall to sixth or seventh on my “Hey, pay attention to me!” list.

Have you noticed our culture has a one-way expectation that a husband should give his wife what she “needs” (sending flowers to

work, doing his share of the dirty work around the house, being a great dad, remembering and celebrating anniversaries) without asking for anything in return? But, as we know, this fantasy man isn't a real husband; he's a character in a dime-store romance novel.

The kind of marriage I want is one in which we're both doing all we can to honor and love each other, putting each other's needs above our own. Philippians 2:3-4 says it best: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

I want this for both of us. The reality is, however, I have control only over my own actions.



The kind of marriage I want is one in which we're both doing all we can to honor and love each other.

Enter The Husband Project

I tried different ideas with some of my friends at church—a variety of “husband encouragement programs.” Most seemed like a lot of work and not much fun. You see, I have the attention span of a third-grader who's just spent six straight hours on Xbox. So I needed something short, doable, and exciting. We, as stressed-out and over-worked wives and moms, don't need to feel burdened by another item on our to-do lists.

So I started thinking and praying about what would truly make my husband feel loved...and maybe even feel lucky to be married to me. I made up a list and began practicing on Roger. Some of the ideas (buying him a gift card to his favorite restaurant and surprising him with an impromptu date) were big hits. Others (like opening mystery clues for an all-day adventure) were, let's say, less than successful.

After several flops (hey, I thought the guys at his work would think

that his lunch sack covered in hearts was adorable) I finally got desperate. I asked him, “Okay, what would make you feel loved?” And yes, I felt pretty pathetic to be asking. After showing him the list, he gave me thumbs up or down on several of the items. I now had a much clearer plan in place. No, cookies in the shapes of bunnies were not necessary. Homemade raw cookie dough, however, was a big thumbs-up. Yes, I asked the questions. I have gone where women fear to tread. I am in possession of the knowledge of what men (or at least my man) like.

This is how The Husband Project was born.

The premise is simple: You and two other friends (your accountability partners) commit to bless your husbands every day for three weeks, in secret.

That’s it. Pretty simple, granted. But not always easy.

No Cookie-Cutter Marriages

While working on the projects, I talked with friends of all ages, in very different marital situations. Some of my friends were in the oh-so-romantic stage of marriage. You’re just done in by how beautifully he shaves. As you pick up his clothes from the bedroom floor, you just can’t help but giggle at how adorable it is that he never puts anything away.

On the other side of the spectrum, I have girlfriends who cannot stand to be in the same room with their husbands while they’re breathing. The “inhale-exhale” is enough to make them want to take up residence at a nice studio apartment in town.

And then there are the other 94 percent of us.

We’re the ones who love our husbands but have fallen into a comfortable routine (*comfortable* often meaning, *you don’t bug me and I won’t bug you*). We’re partners in parenting and contributors to financial matters. We’ve negotiated the household chores (“I’ll do the dishes if you keep the car from making funny noises”) and keep each other on schedule for the dentist and the occasional oil change.

We like our husbands, for the most part. And they like us, for

the most part. While this is okay, it's definitely not what we were anticipating as we planned our weddings and dreamed about our happily-ever-after lives.

I have to admit, I'm writing this book for me and my friends—the 94 percent who want better relationships with our men and are willing to be creative, thoughtful, and possibly daring enough to break out some lingerie to get it.

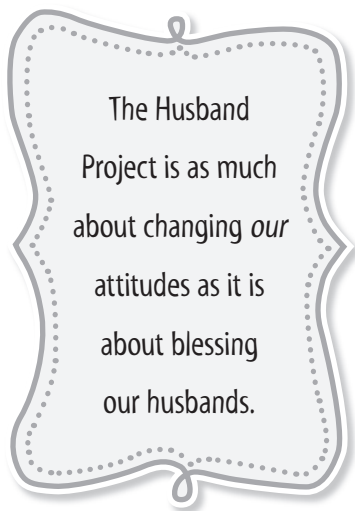
“But He Doesn't Even Notice”

Some women who have tried the projects for a few days wondered if it's even worth it. After doing several of the projects, they complained that their husbands have barely noticed.

So, if you're wearing your cute jeans to meet your husband in the evenings, leaving bags of Gummi Bears for him in his car, and wearing skimpier and skimpier lingerie to bed each night without comment from your man, don't be discouraged.

Working on The Husband Project is a lot like working on your prayer life. I recently committed to set aside a chunk of time daily to pray. As I devote more time to prayer and meditation, I'm realizing that my requests are less about asking God to make things go my way and more about asking God to change my heart to follow Him and *His* plans for me.

The Husband Project is as much about changing *our* attitudes as it is about blessing our husbands. It's great to get positive reinforcement, and when you do, write it down so you can remember it and tailor the way that you show your love in the future. But even when your husband says nothing, you have the knowledge that you have actively



shown him love and support. That's the true gift of The Husband Project.

If you still need some affirmation (and who doesn't?) look for it in other healthy places. In my case I have a friend, Lynn, who sends me a small gift whenever I complete a writing goal. Even if I don't sell an article, I still have the hope of some great Snoopy stickers in the mail.

Ask your accountability partners to celebrate your successes with you. Perhaps if each of you does your daily project for seven days, you give each other a \$5 Starbucks card, or if you do all 21 days, you spend an afternoon together at the spa. Be creative. As it says in Hebrews 10:24, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." A grande latte could be an excellent way to start.

In the next chapter, I'll walk you through a step-by-step guide for launching your own Husband Project.