

How to Live With a Difficult Man

And Jesus looking upon them saith ... With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible. Mark 10:27

Difficult men come in basically two packages: strong or mild. Every man will tend to be either a Luther or a Melancthon; an Elijah or an Elisha. Both the strong and the mild varieties have their upside and their downside. A strong man can be either a Luther or a Hitler. A mild man can be either an Elisha or an Ahab. The difference is whether or not they yield to God.

The strong man is a leader. He's decisive, gets things done, and is a good financial provider. He keeps up the maintenance on the vehicles and around the house without being asked. He is self-motivated in his business.

But a strong man will also be strong in less desirable ways. The typical strong man dominates and demeans his wife. He freely "*tells her*" what she should do, speaks louder and longer than she does, sides the arguments to his favor, and thinks he is right all the time—even when he is wrong. His wife lacks the same skills to compete with him and feels invalidated and controlled. When his needs are everything and her needs mean nothing, eventually her emotions speak loud and clear that he doesn't love or value her any more.

One wife I know runs a neat and clean household, cares well for her lively children, prepares home-cooked meals daily and does her best to love and serve her husband.

But when he comes home, he expects her full and undivided attention. When the toddler needs five minutes of direction, or her baby cries for a diaper change, her husband implies that she's a poor wife and parent by saying, "I could whip this place into shape in one week and the children would be quiet and obedient if I were at home."

Unrealistic expectations are love killers! She can't stop the baby from crying when it has valid needs or a toddler from needing honest direction just because father comes home. No woman likes to be dominated or demeaned. How do you live with a difficult man like this? Perhaps the solution is to marry a milder man instead?

The milder man is *not so pushy*. He is *even tempered* and *carefree*, and a better listener. These characteristics may sound like a visit to heaven, but is that all of the picture? Without God to balance us, every strength has a corresponding weakness.

An easy-going man tends to be forgetful and to procrastinate. Making decisions is difficult. He's so fearful of making a wrong decision that he prods his wife to do it. Then he blames her when things don't go well. He may be a poor provider. Maintenance issues and home projects are seen as optional rather than necessary. He prefers to be spontaneous.

Often he marries a woman who is his opposite and they react to life differently. She likes things to be done and settled. He likes them to be open-ended. She likes things done in a timely, predictable fashion. He wants things to be flexible. She's up early in the morning getting things done in a timely way while he's sleeping in.

She's the racehorse pulling most of the load. Since both work, she makes a list to share the house duties. He feels controlled and reacts. She begins to resent carrying the extra burdens that he's too laid-back to pick up. Isn't this difficult for both parties?

The softer man is sweet, but his tenderness often gets him "down in the dumps". Nothing gets done at home while he wallows in depressive thoughts.

His wife feels isolated. She thinks, "I can't say this...I can't say that... He can't handle it." She avoids all conflicts in order to maintain outward harmony at all costs. She hates her silent prison and wishes he'd choose to come out of it. What a dilemma!

If a milder man can be difficult too, then what is my solution?

1st Solution: Make Christ our Heavenly Husband and constant Companion.

He's always there with an ear to hear and a heart to understand us. He can be our crutch to buoy us up when our husbands can't. We must learn to recognize His voice directing us and learn to follow Him.

2nd Solution: Find freedom from our destructive emotions.

I struggled one day with overwhelming emotions when Jim didn't understand my explanation of my struggle with appetite. I ran down the stairs and out of the cabin and burst into uncontrollable sobbing. "Lord, Jim's got to understand and he doesn't. He must!"

God said, "But I understand!" In that moment, I believed His words. "Well, if God understands, then it's okay that Jim doesn't... But Lord, what do I do with all of these driving, out-of-control emotions?"

"Look at the mountains. I spoke and they were. Faith can move mountains!"

"Are you saying You can you take my out-of-control emotions away? Okay, take them!"

I let go—and God moved my big mountain of emotions. I was at peace—total calm. I felt the hurtful emotions drain right out instantly. It was miraculous.

I wanted Jim to have the freedom I just received. I returned to Jim happy saying, "Jim it's okay that you don't understand. God does!"

3rd Solution: Come to God to sort our painful thoughts and emotions.

Often we hear our husbands through the filter of their anger and our own history. Our minds build up an exaggerated negative view of ourselves and the situation. God wants to give us His wisdom and power to sort out the lies and follow the truth. Evaluate the accusations and/or expectations *honestly* with God. Work with what is real about ourselves, face what needs to be addressed and simply blow the rest away.

4th Solution: Put God in charge—NOT *our emotions*.

Christ is the Creator who can transform bitter water into sweet. Let Him (rather than our emotions) lead our thoughts and responses. He will help us to fly above the oppressive clouds of our feelings and find that we're free to serve God. In this way, God will help us to be faithful to our man when he is difficult by Divine power.

5th Solution: *Submit to God first* before submitting to our husbands.

When we serve God supremely, we serve our husbands properly. This means that we will speak the truth that may cross our husbands when we'd rather not—because God is asking us to. Or we'll remain silent when we'd rather speak—because God is directing our steps.

If a husband asks his wife to do something in the marriage bed that she believes is wrong, does she seek God's will and say I ought to obey God rather than man—even if it results in conflict? Or does she just submit to her husband? If a husband asks his wife to be dishonest, is she willing to stand up for godly principle and not cave in to his pressure?

The dominated wife needs God's direction and strength to plan a courageous conversation and speak her heart; the laid-back man's wife needs the same guidance to build a working partnership; the depressed man's wife needs God to show her how to unlock the prison of depression.

6th Solution: See God as *our source of love* when our husbands don't love us.

We don't have to rehearse all the ugly things our husbands say in anger or despair. "You're worthless." "I'm divorcing you." God wants us to hear Him say, "You are my Princess. Will you marry me? I will never leave you nor forsake you. You can believe me. Take my hand." God is our constant and unyielding source of love.

7th Solution: Intercede for our husbands ... a serious matter

Intercessory prayer is a commitment to pray regularly and specifically for our husbands giving God permission to work in their hearts. “Lord, whatever it takes to change his dominating ways ... his laid back ways ... his depression ... [you fill in your need].”

Let God teach you how to pray with the positive spirit of Philippians 4:8 and the attitude of the Lord’s prayer (Matthew 6) as He taught the disciples. See your husband as he can be in Jesus or you will become depressed by rehearsing his faults daily.

Watch God work. Often God deals with us wives first to strengthen our weakness. When He works with the men it is not unusual for things to get worse before they get better. You will become a better wife and he might be more irritated with you. Know then that God is working and pray as often as God brings him to mind.

God is stronger than any sin, character weakness, or addiction but God waits for our husbands to see their need of Him. Our men cannot change until they surrender to God. When you see your man on his knees know that change is nigh by the grace of God!

God wants to use us women as His instruments to soften our strong men and strengthen our milder men—so that they can be what God designed them to be. It is only in Christ that we can live successfully with our difficult man!