

The Problems with Love & Respect:

In January of 2019, the To Love, Honor and Vacuum blog published a series of five articles delineating the problems with the book Love & Respect by Emerson Eggerichs. The three posts that deconstructed Love & Respect are as follows:

[A Review of Love & Respect and Its Harmful Treatment of Sex](#)

[Why Unconditional Respect Can't Work](#)

[The Ultimate Flaw in Love & Respect](#)

After that series, we received so many comments and emails in which readers described the harm they experienced personally from Love & Respect's message that we prepared a report which we sent to Focus on the Family, whose logo appears on the book and who heavily promotes it.

[Our Report on the Effects of Love & Respect on Marriages](#)

We sent the report directly to Jim Daly, the Focus on the Family director. We know the emails with our report were received; we know that they were opened multiple times; however, Focus on the Family declined to reply or comment. In the ensuing months, we have also tried to engage with Focus on the Family on social media; again, they have not addressed any concerns as of yet.

Since this, Sheila and her husband Keith have also recorded a podcast detailing the toxicity of Eggerichs' blog:

[An Example of Emerson Eggerichs Using the Bible to Gaslight Women](#)

Despite having not yet responded to us directly, Focus on the Family has responded to others, replying with identical form letters. Several people have sent these responses to us. Here is an example of the letter (with only the first paragraph being unique to this particular person). The text is provided first for easier reading, and then the image afterwards.

Focus on the Family's Response to our Concerns:

The Text of their Letter:

Thank you for writing to our Focus on the Family Canada team. Due to the nature of your concerns, your correspondence has been forwarded to our office here in the United States for a response; we value this opportunity to respond and hope you'll forgive the delay in our reply.

We appreciate you taking the time to alert us to the blog post relaying concerns about Dr. Emerson Eggerichs' book *Love & Respect*. In response to the issues raised, we believe we need to begin by saying that we are certainly aware that many women are facing the kinds of dysfunctional and even abusive marital situations to which the the post refers. We would be the first to condemn that type of sinful behavior from men who are not committed to honoring Christ in their roles as husbands.

It's important, however, to distinguish between those resources that are aimed at fine-tuning relatively healthy marriages and those geared toward addressing troubling or even destructive patterns in a marriage. These very different scenarios simply can't be dealt with in the same way, so it's difficult to give guidance for both these types of marriages in the same publication. Indeed, where serious concerns may exist, [there are other books and materials](#) that are geared specifically toward providing practical advice and biblically based encouragement.

In fact, even a cursory view of our [website](#) – and, in particular, our [Marriage](#) channel and [Family Q&A](#) section – demonstrates that we offer a broad array of content tailored specifically for those facing very difficult circumstances in their marriages.

As for Dr. Eggerichs' book in particular, we would suggest that demonstrations of love and respect in marriage are not mutually exclusive. In general, it may be true that most men crave respect – and most women especially want to feel loved – but we also believe Scripture teaches that husbands and wives are to extend both love *and* respect to one another. Indeed, that's the best way to ensure a thriving, fulfilling marriage for both spouses.

Of course, it's also important to bear in mind that being respectful does not mean turning a blind eye to sin. When there are sinful behaviors in a marriage, we have always emphasized the importance of addressing those issues in a biblical manner and holding the offending spouse accountable. Where a relationship is relatively solid, however, and there are no significant issues threatening the marriage, we wish to provide ways for spouses to strengthen their foundation and build on their mutual commitment to loving one another in a way that honors their vow before God as husband and wife.

We hope this response is helpful in clarifying our perspective. Again, thanks for getting in touch and for your interest in our ministry. May God's abundant grace and peace be yours.

Tammy Masters

Focus on the Family U.S.

From: FOF Email Response <Emiresp@fotf.org>

Sent: May 1, 2019 9:46 AM

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Response from Focus on the Family

Dear [REDACTED]

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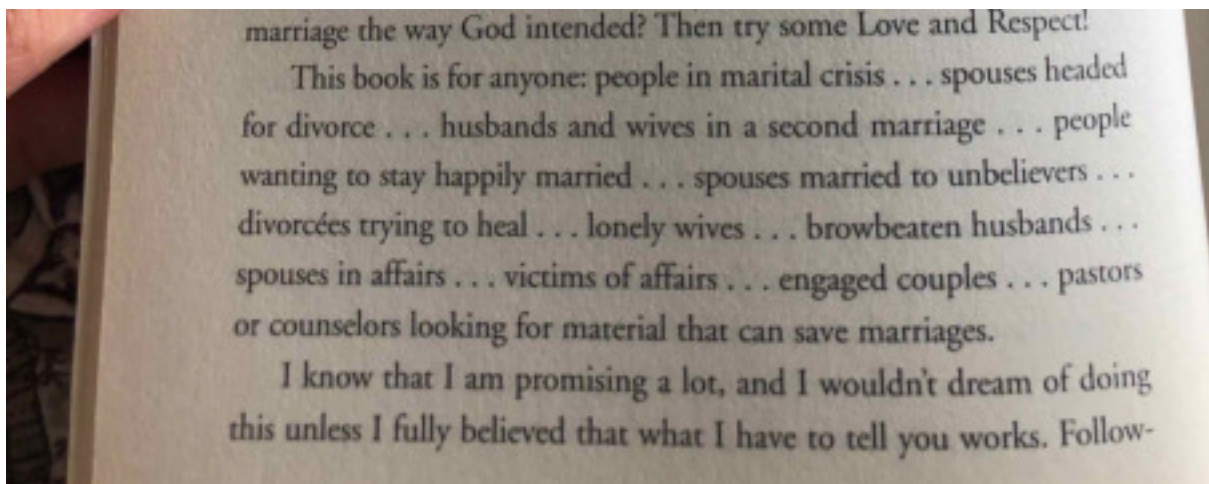
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Tammy Masters

Focus on the Family U.S.

Our Response to Focus on the Family:

1. In this email, FOTF admits that this book is not for those in destructive or troubling marriages, but is only for “fine-tuning relatively healthy marriages”. Thus, they tacitly acknowledge that it should not be used for those in difficult marriages.
2. However, Eggerichs specifically states that the book *is* meant for those in difficult marriages, saying that the book has helped those in marital crisis and those dealing with affairs change. He does not feel, then, that the book is only for “fine-tuning relatively healthy marriages.”



*“This book is for anyone: **people in marital crisis...spouses headed for divorce...husbands and wives in a second marriage...people wanting to stay happily married...spouses married to unbelievers...divorcees trying to heal...lonely wives...browbeaten husbands...spouses in affairs...victims of affairs...engaged couples...pastors or counselors looking for material that can save marriages.**” (p. 2)*

He also uses anecdotes in the book of men who are using porn, having affairs, being physically and emotionally abusive, and drinking too much. He states that you should give men respect “even if they are drinking or straying.” (p. 88)

3. If Emerson Eggerichs says the book is meant for those in marital crises marked by porn use, affairs, abuse, or drinking too much, but Focus on the Family admits that it should not be used for those in destructive marriages, then Focus on the Family needs to clear up their true stance on this book.

Either:

- a. Emerson Eggerichs is giving advice in a way that Focus on the Family itself has said is irresponsible (e.g., they state that this book should not be used for troubling or destructive marriages and Eggerichs is promoting this as a solution for such marriages), and Focus on the Family should stop promoting the book and recall its logo; or

b. Focus on the Family does not consider adultery, abuse, addictions, or pornography use as symptoms of troubling or destructive marriages, but are merely “relatively healthy” marriages in need of “fine-tuning.”

It is not acceptable to say that the book is helpful, and that they will keep recommending it, if they acknowledge that it will harm those in destructive marriages, *while the book itself states that it is written for those in destructive marriages.*

By their own admission, Focus on the Family considers Love & Respect a dangerous book in certain cases. Thus, Focus on the Family needs to pull its endorsement and stop promoting it.

To make an error in judgment is one thing; to keep making that same mistake, after the harm has been pointed out is quite another.

Thus, we implore Focus on the Family, in the strongest possible terms, to listen to the voices of those harmed by Love & Respect. We implore Focus on the Family to act like Jesus and to care about the people who are being harmed by teaching that they are actively promoting.

Again, we urge everyone to read our report of the harm done by Love & Respect, and reconsider their endorsement of the book:

[Our Report on the Effects of Love & Respect on Marriages](#)

Prepared by Sheila Wray Gregoire, Rebecca Gregoire Lindenbach and Joanna Sawatsky
From <https://tolovehonorandvacuum.com>
September 26, 2019

UPDATE: October 5, 2019

I sent the above information to Focus on the Family. They did not respond within a week, so I told them that I would be going public. At that point, they did send a response, contradicting their previous email that said Love & Respect is not for difficult marriages, and instead argued that the book *is* healthy for marriages. They suggested that the problems I have with it are because I must have problems with complementarianism, ignoring the fact that the problems I raised were about abuse.

(the text of their email is below).

Focus on the Family still refuses to engage with the reality that people are being harmed by this book and that it is enabling abuse, despite me begging them to address the harm. They never once mentioned the many women’s stories of abuse in any of their responses.

We have written, repeatedly, about the effects of this book on real people. They continue to talk about Emerson Eggerichs' intent. We submit that intent is irrelevant; what matters is impact. We cannot ignore inconvenient impact for the sake of someone's reputation.

They are saying that the book is a healthy view of complementarianism--implying that they care more about doctrine than the safety of women. I do not believe this is a doctrinal issue; I believe that this is a safety issue, as I have repeatedly stated. To dismiss the concerns over abuse with statements like "we can agree to disagree" is a dereliction of duty, since they put themselves in the position of giving counsel to women.

They say that they have "a sincere and ongoing commitment to helping marriages and families thrive in Christ," but how is that compatible with ignoring abuse? It is not enough to say it. You have to also act on it.

I implore any complementarian who believes that marriage should be a safe place for women to not allow this kind of poison to be associated with your doctrine.

Here is their response:

Response from Focus on the Family    

FOF Email Response Thu, 3 Oct, 12:00 (23 hours ago) ☆ ↶ ⋮
to me +

Dear Mrs. Gregoire:

Thank you for your September 26 email to Focus on the Family, which was addressed to Jim Daly and Tammy Masters. We want you to know that your email has reached the appropriate staff members here at the ministry, and your input has been read and carefully considered.

As a starting point, we can assure you that we are aware of your ongoing concerns about the book *Love & Respect* by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs. However, it's become clear that we have fundamentally different views about the book and whether its core message is helpful. For our part, we believe it is. While we don't have the capacity to address each of your individual concerns, we have observed that in many cases your interpretations of the author's intent do not match our own.

As just one example, you write in your blog that Dr. Eggerichs' overarching "premise is that women only really need love and men only need respect." However, Dr. Eggerichs clearly states otherwise: "[O]f course, women need respect and guys need love, but I'm talking about the primary drive in each sex.... A woman does need respect, and if a man loves her properly, she will get that respect" (p. 47).

More generally, we gather that you take issue with Dr. Eggerichs' complementarian approach to the marital relationship, which seems to underlie much of your concern. Focus on the Family holds to the same complementarian position. We realize that some Christians see the issue differently, and we respect their sincerely held views, though we would hope those differences wouldn't become a stumbling block toward our mutual goal of strengthening marriages in Christ.

We acknowledge your prerogative to continue criticizing Dr. Eggerichs' book. It's only fair to let you know, though, that along with the hundreds of other marriage-building resources Focus offers, we plan to continue making *Love & Respect* available, as we believe its central message aligns with Scripture and can be a beneficial resource for couples. Indeed, we continue to hear from many of them who tell us just that.

We recognize this is not the response you wanted. At this point, though, it's our hope that we can simply "agree to disagree" – and that you'll allow us to emphasize our sincere and ongoing commitment to helping marriages and families thrive in Christ. God bless you.

Rebecca Marshall
Office of the President
Focus on the Family

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