



DC114: Dear Greg: Why Did I Marry My Mother? Part 4

Dear Greg:

Three sessions ago we read a letter from a man who had been manipulated and controlled all his young life by his mother. Even though he hated that, he ended up married to a woman just like his mother. I suggested that he was repeating with his wife the role he had learned to play as a child, and that the only way to change that was to refuse to play the role with his wife. I gave him an example of telling his wife NO when she demanded his time, instead of giving in out of a sense of guilt and obligation.

Now, back to the writer of the letter:

Changing the way you interact with your wife won't be easy. You're USED to the way things are with her, and even though you hate a lot about your relationship, you still GET a lot out of the role you play. Your relationship won't change until you're willing to give up the rewards you're getting. Let's look at some of those rewards.

First, Praise. When you do exactly what your wife wants, she says nice things to you. She smiles at you. She has sex with you. You're afraid you might lose all that, so she holds you hostage by holding it over your head—and it's almost entirely unconscious. You have to be willing to give that up.

Second, conditional approval. Without Real Love, we all need conditional approval pretty badly, and when you do what your wife demands, you feel accepted by her. There are few things in the world you dread more than her withdrawing her approval, and your relationship won't change until you're willing to live through those times. You have to be willing to make choices that she won't like. You have to be willing to set your own course in life even though she WON'T LIKE you. If you live for her approval, you're a slave, and that's no way to run a relationship.

Third, safety. When you make decisions your wife doesn't like, she's going to come down on you with her disapproval and her guilt, and that's going to feel very threatening to you. But life isn't about feeling safe. It's about Real Love, which is given FREELY. Until you can choose to give your wife what you WANT, not what she DEMANDS, you won't have a RELATIONSHIP. You'll just be a hostage, and nobody wins in that situation. Can you see how doing what you CAN is actually more LOVING than doing everything that's DEMANDED of you?

Fourth, a definite place in the world. When you first begin to change your behavior toward your wife, it will be very disorienting. You're used to finding Imitation Love in certain predictable ways, and when you change the rules, all that will be gone. You'll feel lost when you can't reach out and get what you've always used. But the benefits are HUGE. Instead of getting Imitation love, you'll be finding Real Love, and that is worth whatever you do to make it happen.

Read the book *Real Love in Marriage*. That will give you even more guidance about how you can change your relationship with your wife. This will be the beginning of a great adventure. Have fun.