

He Should Stay on His Knees

Since I was a teenager, I wondered why a man would get down on his knees to ask a woman to marry him? From Day One I thought it was weird and not necessary. However, for many, it is thought of as enthralling. Some women look forward to the day when a prince charming would kneel before her with ring in hand and ask her to marry him. Forty-two years ago, I did not get on my knees and I had no engagement ring, and we are still in love.

IS IT NECESSARY?

Is it important for a husband-to-be to get down on his knees with the expected or unexpected proposal with a ring in his hands? Absolutely not. It is only a tradition. This tradition has nothing to do with the quality of the relationship before or after marriage. In fact, I've noticed over my forty-three years of professional life, that many men, standing before their bride-to-be with ring in hand, were egotistical. It was only a show that made his heart swell with pride. Even the "tears of joy" by the future surprised bride could not prevent the "tears of misery" in the marriage.

Based on my research, the origin of this tradition is uncertain. One writer states: "The idea of kneeling on one knee as essential to the standard proposal is not enshrined in history; it appears to be a largely modern invention, but it's not clear how it originated." Hannah Crites writes in the online blog, "Why should men propose on one knee?" "The action itself has been around for centuries. Catholics bend on one knee as a sign of respect toward the tabernacle before taking their seats for the Mass. Knights bend down on one knee before the king when being knighted and when presenting themselves in a show of honor to royalty. In war, the losing party would kneel in front of the army who won the battle in surrender. . . In religion, kneeling is appropriate during prayers and other religious ceremonies, including wedding vows for some faiths. Kneeling is also done to genuflect when entering a church or temple. When proposing, kneeling can have the same spiritual connotation and can be a sign of respect."

RESPECT, HONOR, SURRENDER, HUMILITY

As I read further in the article and many others on the topic, it became clear three words of importance regarding kneeling: respect, honor, and surrender. One research indicates that kneeling in general in European history has been a sign of supplication, humility, and servitude. Humility? Wow! Kneeling in all the above settings suggests giving up power, or willing to let someone share power with you, or admitting you are weaker than the other, or acknowledging an equal or greater power before you.

If we apply these ideas to the marriage proposal on bended knee, then the future husband needs to stay on his knees all his life. Why? Because that symbolism of surrender, respect, honor, and humility, dissipates quickly in the marriage. The whole idea of "we will share power," or "I will listen to you," or "I need you by my side," or "I acknowledge the greatness is you," truly falls through the cracks of male chauvinistic ideology, traditionalism, and a painful and coercive views of "headship" in marriage. Some husbands need to get back down on their knees and stay there for a while until the unavoidable pain of tradition penetrates through the patella and transmits through the nerves reaching the harden hearts of stubbornness, pride, and selfishness. If bending the knee is a symbol of respect, honor, humility and surrender, shouldn't both the man and woman bow before each other when there is a marriage proposal?

IS THERE POWER IN THE RING?

How could a simple act of kneeling before your future bride be so misleading? Because it is only an act; nothing more. It guarantees nothing. Sometimes I wonder if it is the ring itself when I notice the responses on the future brides' faces. They would scream, shout, jump, dance, cry, after noticing the ring. Here are a few questions: Is she happy for receiving the ring because of what it means—getting married? Is she happy because she can tell it is expensive? Is she happy because she can now show off that she officially has a man in her life? Is she happy because she feels equally honored to give him a ring as well? In the Online Sun

Magazine, writer Harley Richardson states: “In the 1930s, De Beers launched an incredibly successful “Diamonds Are Forever” advertising campaign in America, insisting the stones were rare and precious – and the only way to propose marriage.” The advertising did a lot for this merchandiser but not for the hearts of those getting married. These diamonds have done nothing. Men, get down on your knees and stay there.

That’s brings me to the point why men do not wear engagement rings. The reason goes back to ancient times and even during the Victorian age when women were considered property. The ring was a symbol of ownership. He owned her and therefore she had to stay put. He was free to roam the country and have as many women he wanted without consequences. When my son got engaged, he sought and could not find an engagement ring for himself, so he bought a male wedding band instead. I was proud of him. It is my view that both should wear it. However, never forget a ring, no matter how valuable, worn by just the woman or both the woman and the man, does nothing to guarantee there will be no marital discord or breakup. There are many still wearing their wedding bands while receiving their Divorce Decree Absolute.

WOMEN CAN PROPOSE TOO

Do you realize that believing that only men can propose in marriage is false? It is a clear outgrowth of a belief system that men are overall leaders of the home, marriage, church, society. Hence, it teaches that he leads his wife to the altar instead of both meeting there. Therefore, as a marriage officer, I avoid asking in a marriage ceremony: “Who gives this woman to marry this man?” Why isn’t there a question: “Who give this man to marry this woman.” According to theologian John Temple Bristow, the tradition goes back to ancient times when daughters were the property of their fathers who had authority over them. In an ancient marriage ceremony, the fathers gave the daughters to the husbands who then had authority over them. Understanding equality in marriage, this practice is irrelevant. It is not just the woman marrying the man, but the man marrying the woman also and neither of them is property of the other.

It is now time for women to wake up and know that they have a voice in the direction of a marriage relationship and even a proposal. The truth is that there are many who are happily married who have never had a formal proposal. No one got down on bended knees. No one asked the question: “Will you marry me.” They simply, together agreed to get married and jointly made plans to do so.

What makes marriage lasts is the commitment to the task, the actions on making it work, and the humility to listen to each other. It is certainly not asking to marry on bending knees with a diamond ring in hand.

As stated earlier, some men need to get back down on their knees and stay there until they get the message.

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