

A publication of
Genuine Joy Ministries

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- In a marriage, it is your responsibility to protect your family from bad or difficult encounters with your parents.
- Regarding your in-laws, find something positive in the situation, something positive about your mother-in-law, and something positive about your father-in-law.
- Together, as husband and wife, set down boundaries and establish what, when and how visiting will occur and then keep to your decision.

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The Hard Questions

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Answers to Life's Hard Questions— Are You Ready?

Dear Joy,

I don't like my in-laws and they don't like me. My husband has invited them to stay with us for a week this Christmas AND they're coming! What do I do?



In-law problems—a topic most of us can relate to. But what to do about them?

Have you heard the joke about the husband who heard the doorbell ring one morning? When he opened the door, there was his mother-in-law on the front steps.

She said, "Can I stay here for a few days?"

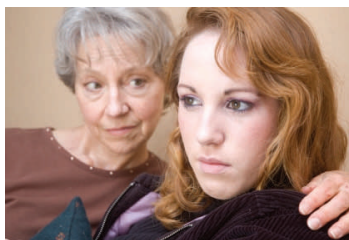
His reply: "Sure you can." And shut the door in her face.

I don't advocate that you do that when your in-laws come for Christmas, although you might be tempted.

I must assume, since I don't have further information, that your husband did not consult you before inviting his parents. It may be that your first and foremost problem is not with your in-laws but communication with your husband. Any invitation such as this should be agreed upon by both of you. Surely he knows of the animosity between you and his parents.

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." Genesis 2:24

It is his responsibility to protect you and your family from bad or difficult encounters with his parents. The Bible gives specific instructions that a man is to leave his parent's home and unite with his wife. Leaving and uniting



means—even if you live in your parents' basement—you are a separate family unit and must protect that from any and all intruders.

In Ephesians 5, the husband is admonished to love his wife the same way as Christ loves the church—caring, providing for, protecting her, even to giving up

his own life for her. As a Christian he should be aware of these responsibilities.

However, you have a difficulty to deal with now, the impending visit of your husband's parents who evidently have some animosity towards you. So, what do you do about this immediate problem?

I don't know if his parents are Christians or not but you as a believer must respond as Christ would. You can't do this without God's help, so prayer is important. You might even consider enlisting a few close friends to pray for the situation and hold you up in prayer.

Determine to find something positive in the situation, something positive in his mother, something positive in his father. I can hear you groaning and saying, "That's impossible. There's no positive character traits in either one of them." But use your imagination and think of even some small thing you can be thankful for in each of them. Keep in mind, your husband, whom you love, was

¹⁵If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

Galatians 5:15



Are we there yet?

raised by these two people. Surely they did something right.

If times get tense or difficult during their visit, you can always excuse yourself and draw apart for a while in order to regain your positive spirit. You might also suggest to your husband that he find a handy motel for them. Not having them in your home twenty-four hours a day could help a lot.

After they return home, it is time for a long talk with your husband about his responsibilities towards you. Perhaps you might even need marriage counseling if he's unwilling or unable to realize the importance of leaving and making a separate life with his new family—you. This certainly doesn't mean you are to ignore or exclude either set of in-laws from your life, but to set down boundaries and establish what, when and how visiting will occur and then keep to your decision. You need good communication skills with your husband. I know, I know, many men don't know how or like to discuss problems but this is essential to a good marriage. If you are both interested in having the best and closest relationship possible, with God's help you can work this out and next Christmas will be joyful and fulfilling.

“Wives and Husbands

²²Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing^[a] her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰for we are members of his body. ³¹“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”^[a] ³²This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”

Ephesian 5:22-33

Resources & Info

Web Sites: *In-Law Complaints, Problems & Relationships*

www.christianitytoday.com/tcw/2008/novdec/2.15.html

www.dovechristiancounseling.com/inlawproblems.html

www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/marriage_challenges/inlaw_relationships.aspx

Books:

I Married You Not Your Family by Dr. Linda Mintle

In-law Relationships: The Chapman Guide to Becoming Friends with Your In-laws by Gary Chapman

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Helping you find genuine joy!

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Sometimes you come up with really hard, tough questions that you don't have the answers to.

At times you're too embarrassed or uncomfortable to ask your friends and family... and when you are brave enough to ask the questions, even they don't always have the answers.

You don't think you have anyone that you can talk to... well now you do.

Genuine Joy Ministries is dedicated to helping you find the answers to life's hardest questions.

Call us—Write us—Fax us—Email us

Just for Fun

A woman woke her husband in the middle of the night and told him "there is a burglar downstairs in the kitchen and he is eating the cake that my mother made for us."

The husband said, "who shall I call, the police or an ambulance?"



"Behind every successful man is a proud wife and a surprised mother-in-law."

Hubert H. Humphrey

