

## ALL ABOUT FAMILIES

"I really believe that being a player in the NFL is easier than being a godly husband or father," - Ken Ruetters, 290 pound tackle for the Green Bay Packers, who protects Brett Farve

### What Falling Leaves Taught Me about Marriage

by Norman Bales

Falling leaves frustrate my marriage. I'm a real fan of autumn colors. Over the years I have used an enormous amount of camera film to record the varying shades of yellow, orange, red, and brown, so spectacularly displayed before the trees fade into a rather grey winter dormancy. I have admired them in upstate New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Massachusetts, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Missouri and right in my own back yard in Minden, Louisiana. As much as I appreciate God's annual color show, I can smell trouble brewing the minute I enter the back door of our house. It's a rather long and drawn out thing because the leaves on our pecan tree start falling in October; the white oak tree doesn't lose its leaves until January and the Magnolia sheds its leaves year round.

Ann wages a determined battle against the tracking of leaves across her clean floors. She carefully places mats, both inside and outside the door. Knowing my forgetful nature, she devises subtle and not so subtle ways of letting me know that I need to wipe my feet before I plant one of my size 11 1/2 shoes on her floors. She'll never believe this, but I diligently wipe my feet before setting foot on her monument to cleanliness, otherwise known as the kitchen floor. Despite my best efforts, I usually leave a trail of leaves to her chagrin and dismay.

I had trouble understanding her concern until recently. During the falling leaf season, she invited some people over to our place for a "come and go" open house the other night. She asked me if I minded vacuuming the floors and I readily agreed to do so. I'm not bragging on my janitorial skills, but I think I did a reasonably good job of cleaning the carpets. After all I did custodial and maintenance work to help pay the college bills when I was in school. I guess you could say I'm a semi-professional floor cleaner. (If you're looking for a cleaning person, I'm not looking for a job.)

Anyway, I went so far as to go back over the carpet to eliminate all signs of footprints. We were all ready for the open house. At least, I thought we were. Ann decided she wanted to light some candles on the dining room table. She desecrated my clean floor by stepping on it. She left visible footprints too. I yelled, "How dare you leave footprints on my clean floor?"

I've been thinking about those two scenarios quite a bit the last few days. I've come to the conclusion that we would all understand one another better as husbands and wives, if we assumed each others' roles more often. When I actually perform the tasks that she normally performs, the more I appreciate her reasons for getting upset when my own actions get in the way of what she's trying to do. It's the age old principle of walking in another person's shoes before finding fault. The Bible put it this way. "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:4)