

Building The Bond Between Husband and Wife

Introduction...

- I. It happens 9.5 times each minute, over 4500 times each day, a judge drops his gavel and proclaims, "divorce granted." It has happened to someone you know, possibly someone in your family, because no one has been left unaffected by this cancer that is eating at the heart and soul of our society...
- II. There are over 1 million divorces in this country each year...
 - A. ... 1 million times people break their marriage vows...
 - B. ... 1 million times couples and their attorneys bicker back and forth over who is going to get what...
- III. Our generation has been called...
 - A. The "cut-flower" generation...nothing lasts for very long.
 - B. It's a "cartridge" philosophy that advocates, "Don't repair it; discard it, and get another one." (Kodak came out with a throw-away camera)...
 - C. This "throw-away" thinking has drifted into marriage. "If it doesn't work, get out of it, and get another one that does."
 - D. Given this type of thinking, it's no wonder that the divorce rate is so high...
- IV. For every ten marriages in America today, statistics say that five will end in bitter conflict and divorce. These statistics are staggering and tragic but have you ever wondered what happens to the other five?
 - A. The truth is – all five of these “successful” marriages will stay together for a lifetime, but in varying degrees of disharmony.
 1. Some couples will remain married for the benefit of children.
 2. Others will pass the years in relative apathy separated by a chasm that the just never seem to be able to bridge.
 - B. Only one or two couples in ten will achieve what might be considered “intimacy” in their marriages wherein they share a life-long bond of friendship, understanding, and commitment.
 1. It occurs when a man and a woman, starting out as separate and distinct individuals, fuse into a single unit which the Bible calls “one flesh” (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5).
- V. What I want to say to you now is that you can be among that top ten percent. You can build a stable, satisfying, intimate relationship that will withstand the storms of life.
 - A. Neither divorce nor a lifeless marriage are inevitable. You don't have to be a victim.
 - B. You can develop a soul-to-soul relationship with your mate. Such is the plan born out of the wisdom and compassion of the Creator Himself; and it offers the greatest satisfaction in the human experience.
- VI. There are many tools that can help you develop this loving bond with your mate, but at least five components are essential to enjoying a close relationship for a life time.

Discussion...

[The single most important key to enjoying a successful marriage – the one thing most likely to guarantee a lifetime of intimacy and love – is...]

I. A Christ-Centered Home...

Psa 127:1 Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it...

1 Cor 3:11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

- A. God created man and God created the marriage plan.

Gen 2:24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

1. With these 21 words God ordained marriage. And five thousand years of recorded history have come and gone, yet every civilization in the history of the world has been built upon God's plan.
2. Who knows man better than the One who created him? To expect happiness – to expect a loving intimate relationship – without acknowledging Him is foolish indeed.

- B. A home that is centered around Christ is a home that is centered around...
1. ... The Bible ...
 - a. The Bible is God's instruction manual on home... e.g., Eph. 5:23-6:4; cf. Deut. 6:4-9; Pro. 31:10-31
 - b. Other portions of sacred text, not specifically directed to the home, have no better application than in the home... 1 Cor. 13:4-8; Gal. 5:22-23; cf. Matt. 5:3-9; 2 Pet. 1:5-7
 - c. The couple that depends on the Scriptures for solutions to the stresses of living has a distinct advantage over the family with no faith.
 2. ... Prayer ... 1 Thess. 5:17; Jas. 5:16; 1 Pet. 3:7
 - a. Daily prayer together is the steady, brick-by-brick construction that provides a safe haven for genuine intimacy with God and with one another.
 - b. In good times, in hard times, in moments of anxiety and in moments of praise we share a privilege of talking directly to our heavenly Father. No appointment is needed to enter into His presence.
 - c. There is something special about prayer between husband, wife, and God that can't be found elsewhere. It creates a spiritual connection, accountability, and a holy bond that brings strength and stability to a relationship.
 - d. Prayer of this kind can revitalize a marriage!
 3. ... Regular Worship ... Heb. 10:23-25 (a special application for the family)
 4. ... Faithful Service ... 1 Tim. 4:11-16
- C. If you and your mate genuinely want to experience God's best for your marriage – a relationship characterized by true love and genuine intimacy – you must build your home around Jesus Christ.

II. A Lifelong Commitment...

Matt. 19:6 "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

- A. Thinking of commitment reminds me of a story that was told about the wedding of a young contract lawyer and his bride. When the minister came to the vows, he asked, "Do you take this woman for better? For worse? For richer? For poorer? In sickness? And in health? The preacher was startled to hear the groom reply, "Yes. No. Yes. No. No. And yes."
- B. In another wedding ceremony, an actual ceremony, one bride and groom pledged to stay married "as long as they continued to love each other." Let's hope they both have good divorce attorneys, because they are going to need them.
- C. Couples asked about marriage and commitment had this to say...
 1. "Marriage is no fairy-tale land of enchantment. But you can create an oasis of love in the midst of a harsh world by grinding it out and sticking in there."
 2. Perfection doesn't exist. You have to approach the first few years of marriage with a learner's permit to work out your incompatibilities. It is a continual effort."
- D. These two views don't sound particularly romantic, do they? But they do carry the wisdom of experience. It is naive to expect two unique and strong-willed individuals to fit together easily like a couple of machines. Even gears have multiple cogs with rough edges that must be honed before they will work smoothly. Therefore, it takes commitment for a marriage to survive this harsh world of sin.
- E. Love can be defined in a myriad ways, but in marriage "I love you" really means: "I promise to be there for you all of my days."
 1. It is a promise that says, "I'll be there when you lose your job, your health, your parents, your looks, your confidence, your friends."
 2. It is a promise that tells your partner, "I'll build you up; I'll overlook your weaknesses; I'll forgive your mistakes; I'll put your needs above my own; I'll stick by you even when the going gets tough."
- F. This kind of commitment will hold you steady through all of life's ups and downs.

III. A Deep and Abiding Trust...

1 Cor 13:7 Love... "always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (NIV)

- A. Every individual faces a critical question on a daily basis: Do I trust my partner or not?
 - 1. We may not even be aware that the question is before us, but even so, the way we answer it has everything to do with the level of intimacy we achieve with our mate.
 - 2. Relationships dominated by fear and insecurity will never reach their potential, but marriages founded on trust and safety will flourish.
 - 3. The truth is, trust must be earned over time.
- B. Trust is earned in two ways...
 - 1. What you say.
 - a. Do you enjoy teasing your husband or wife? When you're with friends, do you occasionally reveal an embarrassing secret about your partner?
 - (1) One way to destroy trust is to hurt or embarrass the one you love.
 - (2) If you have ever been to a party and watched someone play "Assassinate the Spouse," you know what I mean. This game is cruel, even when it's carried out under the guise of joking and teasing.
 - b. You earn the trust of your spouse by the way you "edify" them... Eph. 4:29
 - 2. What you do.
 - a. Words and the way you use them are terribly significant, but the surest way to establish trust in marriage is through your actions... Eph. 5:15
 - b. Build a record of choices and deeds that proves to your partner you can be trusted at all times – especially in regards to your relations with the opposite sex.
 - c. Build a hedge around your home by talking with your partner about your interactions with the opposite sex and establish sensible, sensitive guidelines – and NEVER violate them!
 - (1) Some couples rule out lunch with a coworker, traveling together, talking alone behind closed doors, sharing rides, or working as a "couple" on projects.
 - (2) Agree on what you both consider reasonable and stick to that agreement.
- C. Trust begins with God.
 - 1. It is only when husbands and wives commit themselves to living according to God's ways that a deep and lasting bond of trust develops between them.
 - 2. We can give our heart confidently to our spouse when we know that he or she is genuinely seeking to follow God and His Word.

IV. A Willingness To Communicate... Col. 4:6

- A. We live in a strange generation. With the dawn of word processors we are pumping out more words than ever – yet, we are not communicating.
- B. Nowhere is this more true than in our marriages. Most marriages that dissolve do so, not because there are not enough words spoken, but because communication does not really take place.
- C. One man truthfully said, "Communication is to a marriage what blood is to the body," i.e, it gives it life. Without communication, marriages have little chance of surviving. Therefore if we want our marriage to thrive, then we must learn to communicate.
- D. There are at least seven key elements that are important to effective communication...
 - 1. First of all, do it! Communicate!
 - 2. "Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt..." Col. 4:6
 - 3. Speak the truth and be transparent... Eph. 4:15,25; Col. 3:9
 - 4. Avoid words of blame. Attaching blame on another is more an attempt to remove responsibility from the "blamer" than it is to assign fault. Such creates rifts in relationships quickly.
 - 5. Avoid over-statements. Have you ever heard your spouse say, "You never do anything right!"?
 - 6. Learn to listen.
 - a. Most of us are poor listeners because we live in a world saturated with verbiage. We feel that silence is a time to assemble what we are going to say, not a time to listen to what others say. This is true in every area of our lives, especially in marriage.

- b. Most lack of communication does not come from what is said but from what is NEVER HEARD...
 - c. James instructs us to... *“Be quick to hear...”* Jas. 1:19
7. Remember the awesome power of your words... Prov. 18:21; Matt. 12:36-37

V. An Understanding of Romantic Love...

- A. The word romance conjures up different images for each of us, and our expectations of what constitutes a romantic relationship also vary.
 - 1. Women are inclined to describe romance as the things their mate does to make them feel loved, protected, and respected.
 - 2. Men rely more on their senses in the area of romance.
- B. The most evocative descriptions of romantic love, Biblically speaking, come from the Song of Solomon. They include...
 - 1. Intimacy and emotional excitement...
 - 2:16 *“My lover is mine and I am his”*
 - 5:4 *“My heart began to pound for him”*
 - 2. A desire and complete appreciation for another
 - 4:1 *“How beautiful you are, my darling”*
 - 3. Pursuit of the object of our affection and pining when he or she alludes us
 - 3:1 *“All night long on my bed I looked for the one my heart loves; I looked for him but did not find him”*
 - 4. Public display of affection
 - 2:4 *“He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love”*
- C. Though romance can mean vastly different things to each of us, for most the word describes that wonderful feeling of being noticed, wanted, and pursued – of being the very center of our lover’s attention.
 - 1. Typically, most couples maintain this sense of romance throughout their courtship and at least through the newlywed phase of marriage.
 - 2. But, then, as the years go by and new duties and responsibilities pile on, those romantic feelings all too often begins to fade. It need not be so.
- D. You can have a love that Solomon said, *“burns like a blazing fire, like a mighty flame”* (SoS 8:6) but it will require your own going time and attention.

Conclusion...

- I. Remember, YOU can be among the two couples in ten that achieve and maintain “intimacy” in your marriage – sharing a life-long bond of friendship, understanding, and commitment.
- II. You can build a stable, satisfying, intimate relationship that will withstand the storms of life. But it takes making the right choices, strong commitment, and hard work.
- III. Anything worth having comes with a price tag. Are you willing to pay it?