

Being and Remaining Compatible in Marriage

Mrs. Pope and I are in Waco. We have had a great youth conference. I speak this morning then we leave from here to drive to Tulsa to be part of the wedding ceremony for a young man that was reared up in our church. I went to the hospital to pray with Don and DJ White when their youngest son, Stephen was born. I had the privilege to baptize him after he gave his heart to Christ. We witnessed him grow up, both physically and spiritually. He surrendered to preach, went to Bible college and now he is attending seminary. We couldn't be happier for Stephen. He has centered himself in God's will and made some wise choices. One of those wise choices was in marrying this Oklahoma girl -Brooke.

As I write these words on this morning before one of Christchurch's youth marries, I am consumed with these thoughts: how to be and remain compatible in your marriage. One of the sad days in America's history is when our local governments began to allow non-compatibility as a reason for divorce. It opened a can of worms that has allowed an atmosphere of "throw-away" marriages. I admire some of our states' enacting or at least considering the covenant marriage as a viable option.

The dictionary defines compatible as: an adjective: able to exist or occur together without conflict: able to have a harmonious relationship: well suited. As you permit your eyes to fall upon these few lines, allow me to give you three simple rules for being and remaining compatible.

1. Keep your word.

In the marriage ceremony we vow to love unconditionally, through sickness and health, poverty and wealth, forsaking all others until death parts you. For us Christians, marriage is always a covenant, not a mere contract that can be broken. The Bible says, "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay" (Ecclesiastes 5:4,5). No marriage is ever safe if divorce is considered and option. Determine come what may, you are not going there!

2. Stay pleasant.

You cannot get inside someone else's skin and modulate their behavior. But you can govern your own behavior, which goes a long way in influencing those around you. When your temper is aroused, slow down, think rationally and speak kindly. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19). "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Proverbs 15:1).

In marriage, you will learn quickly the irritation points. Be determined not to push the other's "hot buttons" in the way and manner in which you speak. Be thoughtful enough not to do those irritating things. If not picking up after yourself is a real bother to your spouse, do the right thing – pick up after yourself. Although it is not a main reason, it can become time saving to be pleasant. For instance, the reason you do not pick up after yourself is because you are trying to save time. Well, if you manage to create an altercation, do you realize how time consuming an argument can become? Not to mention the emotional damage. Allow me to put the shoe on the other foot. I remember a fellow professor at the school in which I was teaching who died early one morning on the way to college. I was preaching in a neighboring state several months after his funeral. His wife gave a testimony I shall never forget. She said, "Jim used to bother me with his dirty socks on the floor." Then she smiled and wistfully said, "I would love to have Jim back today, dirty socks and all!" You see in the larger vision of reality...those little irritating things do not matter. Then let us behave as though they do not matter!

3. Be Spiritual

The Bible says, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). Only a

spiritual person can be part of the healing of any breach. The word translated restore is the word for “setting the bone.” In a very true sense, the spiritual activity on the part of a spiritual person sets the healing process in place. Walk with God! We are Christians; let us act like it. Be faithful in your private devotions; be faithful in your family altar. Be consistent in your church attendance. Let your entertainment always be wholesome. Let your demeanor reflect Christ-likeness. Be spiritual in all things and at all times. It is when we let our guard down that we get into trouble.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

- Pastor Pope -

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