

Advice to Newlyweds and Reminders to Mature Marriages, Part 2

Continuing our thoughts from last week, we return to the advice I would give newlyweds and reminders to mature marriages. We never get to the point in our marriage when we cannot learn. One man said in humor, "There are two ways of understanding a woman, but no one has figured out either way yet." If said in a crowd this statement could illicit a laugh, however according to the Word of God it is not a laughing matter. Peter said, "*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge...*" (I Peter 3:7). So I tell young husbands who are about to get married, you are on a life-long course and quest: Wife-ology 101 and Marriage 202. We should never stop learning. As I write these words, may I remind you that I am not a marriage scholar, I am a marriage student. I am still learning. Do not be discouraged; just like any course you take, you can love the course! When I walked into Bible classes or history classes, I bristled with excitement. It was not always because my professor was terribly interesting; it was often because I was terribly interested! I am convinced had I approached modern math with the same excitement, I would have learned more. Let's become wonderfully interested in marriage or better yet, become wonderfully interested in our marriage partner. Let's see what blesses them and let's avoid those potential areas that may hurt them. Don't forget, if you hurt them, you are in fact hurting yourself, because you are one flesh. Ephesians 5: 28 and 29 says, "*So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.*"

Last week we discussed three things that would enhance our marriage: (1) Consecrate and Dedicate. We need to seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness by putting Jesus first (Matthew 6:33). (2) Leave and Cleave. We would never have the proper cleaving together as one, until we, with grace, leave our former home life. Your marriage is a whole new entity (Matthew 19:5). (3) Apologize and Harmonize. A modern song from a couple of decades ago said, "Love means you never have to say you're sorry." This philosophy is completely humanistic in worldview. If we love someone with the agape love of God, we cannot wait to say I'm sorry, when we understand we have wronged the person we love. Let us now discuss the final three pieces of advice I would give to newlyweds and reminders to marriages that could use some reviving.

IV. Forgive and Forget

Forgiving is never an option for the Christian, it is a clear-cut command. The Bible says, "*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*" (Ephesians 4:32). It is hard not to love a kind person. In the great love chapter, I Corinthians 13, the Bible says, "*...Charity...is kind....*" If you say, "Pastor, you don't know how badly I have been hurt." I will say, Jesus knows. And He is the one who prayed for forgiveness even from the cross over those who mocked Him, beat Him and had just pieced Him. Some of you are holding out by saying, "Well, they did not say they're sorry!" My answer is in the form of a question: who was saying they're sorry at the foot of the cross when our Lord said, "*...Father, forgive them...*" (Luke 23:34)? How do we embrace this other-world teaching? I would suggest we look at the other half of the prayer of forgiveness uttered by our Lord from the cross: "*...for they know not what they do...*" (Luke 23:34). In the midst of His agony, we see our

Lord reaches out in kindness by understanding these people who are hurting Him. He realizes they do not comprehend their own wicked heart, so He prays the prayer of mercy for them to understand before any judgment falls upon them. Kindness is not a matter of disposition; it is a matter of decision. Decide to be kind today. Your spouse doesn't "make" you mean. If you are mean, it is because you have chosen to be mean. This world is full of Christians who have risen above their unpleasant circumstances with a sweet Christ-like spirit. Paul said, *"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men"* (Romans 12:18). How much more should we choose to live peaceably with our spouse?

Let us then make another decision, let us decide to forget. Love is blind. This does not mean love cannot see, it means love has eyelids and chooses to close them to the bad and open for the good. Love takes no pleasure in a husband's or wife's fall; love makes provision for recovery and is prepared to celebrate over the results. *"Charity...rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth"* (1 Corinthians 13:6). In the first book of the Bible we learn a valuable lesson: *"And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not..."* (Genesis 9:23).

V. Live to Give

Lust cannot wait to get; love cannot wait to give. Love is not selfish. It is the antithesis to self-aggrandizement. *"Charity...seeketh not her own..."* (1 Corinthians 13:5). Jesus said, *"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise"* (Luke 6:31). Love is proactive to fulfill others' needs. *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 2:3-5).

If we live to get, we shall always be frustrated. A true giver is a great lover! If we live to give, we shall always have a superabundance of satisfaction. Although the specific reference is monetary, the principle of giving and receiving is true in every aspect, especially in the realm of relationships. Jesus said, *"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again"* (Luke 6:38). Allow me permission to paraphrase: Find the need of your spouse and with God's ability that He provides, meet that need! You shall have your need met in the process. God will provide in heaps, pressed down, shaken together and loaded up again until you run out at the top! You cannot out-give God! Your spouse will give back to you in kind. Your spouse will use the same measuring cup that you use.

VI. Plan for Permanency.

I have said this for years and I believe it now more than ever: if divorce is ever considered as an option, no marriage is safe. If you harbor the thought "if he or she treats me in such-and-such a manner, I'm out of here," then old Satan will find a way to get you to that point. If you are looking for a way out of marriage, you'll find it. Don't

make provision for failure. In weddings I perform, after I ask the couples to repeat their vows after me, I almost feel like asking, "Do you really mean it?"

The wise man, Solomon said, *"Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun"* (Ecclesiastes 9:9). He also said, *"Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?"* (Proverbs 5:20). Notice Solomon said in both instances to *"live joyfully"* and *"rejoice with the wife."* We are commanded to get happy about this set-up! Let me emphasize, Solomon said, *"... all the days of the life of thy vanity..."*, not just some of the days! Then he added the most touching thought: *"... for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun."* What is this wise man saying? He is saying, in this life your spouse is your greatest investment, she is your "portion"! This is the Hebrew word: **חֵלֶק**, "chêleq" which is translated: share, part, territory, tract, parcel (of land), portion, award (from God). At the end of our life our relationship with our spouse is our greatest legacy!

-Pastor Pope-