

# Rekindling Marriage: Learning to Be An Understanding Spouse

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## **I. THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM: SIN.**

A. Any marriage is a union of two sinners under the same roof.

B. Sinners are by nature self-centered and proud.

C. Ways in which this problem manifests itself in marriage:

1. A general lack of gratitude. Proud people think they deserve anything good that happens and don't deserve anything bad (Rom. 1:21).
2. Anger. Proud people are often angry because what they perceive to be their rights or expectations are not met. (Matt. 20:1-16).
3. Perfectionism. People who strive for everything to be perfect often do so that they might feel good about themselves. The basic problem is making things that are less important more important (Matt. 23:24-28).
4. Seeking independence or control. Proud people are often rigid, stubborn, headstrong, and intimidating. They have trouble submitting to others (Phil. 2:2-8).
5. Being devastated or angered by criticism. Pride tends to take everything personally. It is thin-skinned (Prov. 13:1).
6. Lack of compassion and unforgiving spirit. Such a person is rarely concerned for others (Matt. 18:23-25).
7. Lack of admitting when you are wrong. Pride is defensive. It shifts blame. It makes excuses for sin (Prov. 12:1).
8. Maximizing other's sin and shortcomings. To the proud person, others are always the problem (Matt. 7:3-5).

## **II. THE FUNDAMENTAL NEED: A HUMBLE HEART AND MIND.**

A. Humility is unnatural to fallen man. Only a believer who has the indwelling Holy Spirit can learn humility.

B. When someone is humble they are focused on God and others, not self.

C. Ways in which humility manifests itself:

1. Being overwhelmed with God's undeserved grace and goodness. A humble person sees himself as truly deserving Hell. He is immensely grateful for God's mercy and forgiveness. (Psalm 116:12-19).
2. Being gentle and patient. Humble people love others. They are willing to wait and are not easily irritated (Col. 3:12-14).
3. A teachable spirit. A humble person is thankful for criticism and reproof. They know that God is trying to teach them something. They realize they don't know everything. They have many people they admire and respect (Prov. 9:8-9).
4. Seeking always to build others up. Humility always has uppermost in its mind the "preciousness of others." (Ephesians 4:29; Phil. 2:2-4).
5. Quickness to admit it when wrong. Humble people have no problem saying, "I am wrong. You are right." (Prov. 29:23)
6. Minimizing other's shortcomings. A humble person is aware of his own sins and sees them as more important to deal with than that of others (Matt. 7:3-4).

D. Humility is not a onetime accomplishment. It must be put on daily, moment-by-moment.

1. If we will not deal with our pride, God will. James 4:6 literally says that God fights against the proud.

**III. SOME FOUNDATIONAL ISSUES TO HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING ATMOSPHERE IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP.**

A. You must decide and settle, once for all, that you love each other and are committed to growing through the problems, no matter what.

1. This means that, while difficult issues will come up, you will believe that your mate means well toward you, even when he/she makes day-to-day mistakes. (1 Pet. 4:8).
2. This means that you make a fundamental decision that *your mate is not your problem*. Your problem is the unbiblical things each of you are saying and doing. This

is what needs to be addressed.

3. How you respond when your mate sins will go a long way toward determining whether they grow through failure or are discouraged and defeated by it.

B. You must seek to cultivate the ever-increasing oneness that God intends for marriage to be. (Gen. 2:24).

1. You do this through communication. Remember that revelation always precedes relationship (1 Pet. 3:7).

2. You do this through inclusion. Eliminate any mentality of separateness. There is no area of your life into which your spouses' knowledge and input is not invited and desired.

3. You do this through affection. A touch, a gentle word, a compliment, an embrace, a kiss, an act of kindness and service all say to your spouse that they matter to you.

#### **IV. THE HUSBAND IS COMMANDED TO TAKE THE LEAD AND SET AN UNDERSTANDING TONE IN THE MARRIAGE. (1 Peter 3:7).**

A. Note the emphasis in Ephesians 5:25-33. Four times in these verses the husband is told to love his wife. Obviously, a loving husband is an understanding husband. Love is to be the character of the husband's leadership in the home.

1. Leaders, by the very nature of the position, are to be the Initiators in any endeavor.

2. Followers, by the very nature of the position, are to be the Responders in any endeavor.

3. Because of this principle, when the husband takes the lead in developing an atmosphere of love and understanding it disciplines the wife to respond the same way. Remember: leaders always disciple followers.

a. He who loves his wife loves himself (Eph. 5:28).

B. The husband is to love his wife and lay down his life daily for her, according to Ephesians 5:25-33.

1. This requires that he be committed to know and understand her likes/dislikes, capabilities/limitations, her joys, her struggles, her fears, her temptations, her physical/spiritual needs, what communicates love to her, what communicates indifference to her, and what encourages her/discourages her.

- a. The wife should also commit herself to knowing the same things about her husband. This is a part of her ministry as the suitable helper (Gen. 1:18).
2. The husband's love and understanding has two key goals:
    - a. Nurture the wife spiritually (Eph. 5:26-27). This involves helping her progress in Christlikeness and cleansing her through the Word of God.
    - b. Nourish the wife physically (Eph. 5:29). She is to be fed, cared for, protected. The husband is to lead in such a way that a sense of warmth, security and protection pervades the home.
  3. What quenches such love?
    - a. Bitterness (Col. 3:19). Bitterness is the result of responding improperly to a hurt---dwelling on it, holding on to anger (Heb. 12:15).
    - b. Self-love. Self-love breeds selfishness. This is the great fallacy of "self-esteem" teaching (Eph. 5:29).

## **SUMMARY**

- A. Do you think a truly Christian wife would have trouble submitting to her husband if she was physically married to Jesus Christ?
  1. Guess what, men? The more you progress in becoming like Jesus Christ the more your wife will want to submit to you.