

The Practice of Marriage

(The Glue that Holds it All Together: Commitment—Part 3)

Galatians 6:9

Key Thought: Oneness develops through the consistent practice of marital love by both spouses.

(Corollary: Isolation develops through the inconsistent practice of marital love by one or both spouses.)

Introduction

- Sometimes we just don't feel like being married, particularly when there seems to be more downs than ups. That's when we must call to mind that the marriage vows (i.e. "for better or worse," "'til death do us part", etc.) we made to our spouse and God are binding. (**"When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it, for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow" Eccles. 5:4.**) We are released from these vows by God only when our partner commits adultery (Matt. 19:9-10) or an unbelieving mate walks out of the marriage (I Cor. 7:13-15). Outside of these two conditions our vows commit us to being faithful and sticking it out during the difficult times of discouragement and disillusionment. Commitment becomes the glue that holds us together when we feel like we are coming apart.

- "But you don't know my situation! You don't know what I having to live through!" many protest. That's true, but it still does not change the word of God. Marital vows must be taken seriously. To break them is to step outside of His will for your life. (**Note:** When there is physical violence or extreme mistreatment toward you or your family, commitment to Christ supercedes all other principles in the home. This is not to advocate divorce, but it does strongly suggest that restraint and safety by separation may be necessary. It's one thing to be in submission, but it's another to become the brunt of a spouse's indignity, physical assault, sexual perversion or uncontrolled rage.)

- Vows must not be taken lightly—God doesn't. The commitment of marriage is a commitment for life. Honor Christ by honoring your promise (vow) that you have made to Him and your spouse.

- **"And let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while *we will reap a harvest of blessing* if we don't get discouraged and give up" Galatians 6:9 (TLB)**
Note: The reaping will come at God's proper time, which may be only in part in this life and in full in the life to come at the judgement seat of Christ.

❑ **How can I strengthen my commitment?**

1. Determine to work through conflict—don't walk out.

The minute you begin to entertain the idea of divorce you've taken the first step to the courtroom. *Don't even talk about divorce!* All marriages have conflicts—some severe. Don't check out when they come. Even though you are committed to your mate, there will be times of tears, struggle, tension, disagreement, and impatience. *Commitment doesn't erase our humanity!*

Note: Having the Lord Jesus Christ living in you and the Word of God guiding you, there is no conflict that is beyond your ability to endure. You may not solve it (i.e. sometimes a mate will refuse to cooperate) but you can endure it. You can grow *through it!*

❑ **Five good reasons for working through conflict rather than walking away:**

1. Because it is the continual counsel of Scripture.
2. Because one's growth in Christ is strengthened.
3. Because the testimony of Christ is enhanced.
4. Because working through conflict forces needed change. (Walking out means carrying your baggage to the next relationship.)
5. Because children in the family remain more secure, stable, and balanced. (They also learn to run if parents run.)

• **Don't walk out...work it out!**

2. Determine to become best friends with your spouse.

Every marriage has an emotional climate, or atmosphere. That atmosphere is the composite of all the facets of your relationship; it determines how successful your marriage will be. The best atmosphere for a great marriage is friendship. When a husband and wife determine to become good friends their marriage sings rather than stalls.

❑ **How can I become by spouse's best friend?**

1. Good friends *spend time* together.
2. Good friends *help* each other.
3. Good friends *listen* to each other.
4. Good friends *don't threaten* each other.
5. Good friends *support* each other.
6. Good friends *protect* each other.
7. Good friends *defend* each other.
8. Good friends *encourage* each other.
9. Good friends *pray* for each other.
10. Good friends *respect* each other.

3. Determine to release your rights.

We live in a world that is bent on demanding rights. God has a better way—rather than demanding your rights, He commands us to release them! It’s not “What can you do for me?” but rather “What can I do for you?”

(“Love *does not demand its own way*” I Corinthians 13:5)

4. Determine to be holy rather than happy.

Our ultimate calling in life is to glorify God—not to be happy! As we seek to glorify Him, He sees to it that other essential needs are met...or my “need” for them diminishes.

(“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body” I Corinthians 6: 19-20)

□ May the following be the standard for your marriage:

Motivating one another to become all that God intended you to become!

Accepting one another just as you are!

Relinquishing your rights to meet your spouse’s needs!

Respecting your spouse as a person!

Initiating communication at every opportunity!

Attentive to one another!

Going in the same direction!

Expecting many great years ahead!

- **This is what marriage is all about! May your marriage be continually renewed and refreshed as you practice all the principles we’ve discussed. May God give us more 50th anniversaries!**

