



January 07, 2022

Some Thoughts on Marriage, Continued

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

I've received several positive responses to our discussion on Marriage since last Friday evening's letter went out...so we'll continue this week. I want to preface what is written to frankly say, I am not the perfect example of marriage, nor claim somehow to have mastered the "husband" part. So this applies to all of us.

This is always a needed topic, and timely. Soon the world we live in will begin to bombard us all with all the various things surrounding the non-biblical holiday of Valentine's Day. You also won't see many articles addressing what is really important about marriage as God instituted and ordained it. What you will see is a lot of focus on purely the sexual part of marriage, or in many cases an absolute disregard for marriage and purely focusing on the physical. Sadly, monetary gain is a huge focus of this holiday, like most of the others.

We discussed a bit last time that marriage counselor and psychologist Dr. Willard F. Harley created "four rules to override the destructive tendencies of the Taker in the marriage".

Here's his first rule for a successful marriage: The Rule of Care - Meet Your Spouse's Most Important Emotional Needs.

Dr. Harley defines an emotional need as "a craving that, when satisfied, leaves you with a feeling of happiness and contentment, and, when unsatisfied, leaves you with a feeling of unhappiness and frustration." When marriage partners discern the needs of the other partner and make it a priority to meet them and fulfill them, then deposits are made to the "Love Bank". There does not have to be some long list of these emotional needs and desires. When the important ones are satisfied, the relationship will be healthy and have the bonding of real and genuine love.

Dr. Harley, after interviewing many couples, found that there were basically ten emotional needs that were consistently mentioned.

Here they are: admiration, affection, conversation, domestic support, family commitment, financial support, honesty and openness, physical attractiveness, recreational companionship and sexual fulfillment.

He also found that usually the top needs for women were very different than the top needs for men. Of course there are always the exceptions to the rule, so Dr. Harley advises couples to carefully "identify their own unique needs".

We might ask, how does a spouse go about identifying the needs of the other person?

It takes communication and discernment. Dr. Harley has actually developed an Emotional Needs Questionnaire that he asks each marriage partner to complete and then share the responses with their partner. I've found this questionnaire helpful over the years in serving couples in counseling.

Of course just knowing what the other person needs is only the beginning. There has to be a commitment to demonstrate and put them into action.

God makes a most interesting profound analogy in Ephesians 5:21-33. Also, living our lives as Disciples of Christ also has some commonality to our marriage relationships. Loving God is the great commandment or summary of the first Four of the Ten Commandments. (Deut 6:5; Matt 22:36-37)

How do we express and demonstrate that love?

Just claiming to love God or acknowledging that we need to be doing such is not enough. Just like expressing faith, love has substance and meaning when it is accompanied by appropriate works and actions. (James 2:17-20) Jesus told the disciples during that final Passover, "If you love Me, *keep My commandments.*" (John 14:15) I'd say this has always been a downfall for humans, as obeying God is often replaced with form, not substance.

To demonstrate genuine love to a spouse and to our God, we must be sincere and do it from the heart. "*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.*" (1 John 5:3)

Just going through the motions and making an empty ritual out of an action will not fulfill the instruction. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 gets to the heart and inner core of love. When these qualities of a right heart and motivation are present, right actions will be discerned and demonstrated.

Our loving God clearly communicates to us what He desires of us in our relationship with Him. There are multiple books and chapters in the Bible devoted to it.

There is a kind of summary that God gave to Israel and that applies to us as Disciples of Christ. "*And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God,*

to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?" (Deut 10:12-13)...some thoughts to reflect on as we near the Sabbath coming up. We'll continue this discussion on marriage later...

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

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