

Steps to Saving Your Marriage

INTRODUCTION.

- A. If I were to tell you that marriages and families are under attack, you would probably not be surprised. The fact that marriages are crumbling is nothing new in our current society.
- B. While I could give you statistics to show the number of divorces per year, I suspect that you are already aware of the severity of the situation. You may have friends, neighbors, co-workers, or even family members whose marriages and families have been destroyed. Much like the aftermath of the destruction of the World Trade towers, there is rubble and wreckage scattered everywhere of marriages and families devastated by divorce.
- C. With this lesson, I would like to help you to save your marriage and protect your marriage. We will be considering four steps that will help in keeping your marriage whole.

I. STEP ONE: LOVE YOUR SPOUSE.

- A. Love is the basic foundation upon which a marriage is built. A man and a woman enter the marriage relationship because each has developed a love for the other. If there is no love, then there should be no wedding.
- B. Let us look at God's commands regarding love within the marriage relationship.
 - 1. The husband is to love his wife. (Ephesians 5:25-29)
 - a. “. . . love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her . . . ” (vs 25)
 - b. “So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.” (vs 28)
 - c. “. . . but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.” (vs 29)
 - (1) nourishes - *ektrepho* {*ek-tref'-o*} 1) to nourish up to maturity, to nourish 2) to nurture, bring up (Enhanced Strong's Lexicon)
 - (2) cherishes - *thalpo* {*thal'-po*} 1) to warm, keep warm 2) to cherish with tender love, to foster with tender care (Ibid.)
 - (3) A husband who takes to heart the command to nourish and cherish his wife will most certainly show his wife his love by

putting her cares and wants before his own cares and wants.

- d. The husband is to love his wife the way Christ loved the church.
 - (1) Christ loved the church so much that he put the eternal well-being of man above His own comfort.
 - (2) The Lord made a great sacrifice for the church. In like manner, husbands should be willing to make sacrifices for their wives.
- e. The husband is to love his wife as he loves his own self.
 - (1) A man who truly loves his wife loves himself. Remember, the husband and wife are one. (cf. Genesis 2:24)
 - (2) A man should tend to the needs of his wife as much as he would tend to his own needs. This leaves no room for selfishness on the part of the husband.
- 2. The wife is to love her husband. Titus 2:4 reads, “. . . *that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, . . .*” (Titus 2:4, NKJV)
 - a. Love - *philandros* {*fil'-an-dros*} -
 - (1) loving her husband (Enhanced Strong's Lexicon)
 - (2) primarily, “loving man,” signifies “loving a husband,” Titus 2:4, in instruction to young wives to love their husbands, lit., “(to be) lovers of their husbands.” (Vines Complete Expository of Old and New Testament Words)
 - (3) *fond of man*, i.e. *affectionate* as a wife:—love their husbands. (New Strong's Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words)
 - b. The wife is commanded to love her husband. Based on the meaning of *philandros*, we see that this love is a shown love. The wife is to love and to show love towards her husband.
- C. If the husband loves his wife as Christ illustrated and the wife loves her husband as God instructed, then their marriage will be protected against the outside attacks of the world.
 - 1. Husbands, your words and actions will show your wives how much you truly love them. Make sure that your wife knows how much you love her. By so doing, she should not be tempted by the affections of another man.
 - 2. Wives, the same principle applies to you. Your words and actions will show

your husbands how much you truly love them. Do all that you can to make certain that your husband is confident of your love. By so doing, he should not be tempted by the affections of another woman.

3. This love between a man and wife also provides security within the relationship.
 - a. If a woman knows that her husband loves her, then she will trust and have confidence in him – knowing that he will not turn to another woman.
 - b. Likewise, if a husband knows that his wife loves him, then he will trust her not to turn to another man.

II. STEP TWO: POSSESS SELFLESSNESS.

- A. Selflessness should be a virtue of every husband and every wife. Selflessness simply means to be concerned more with the needs and wishes of others than with your own needs and wishes.
 1. Selflessness is the opposite of selfishness. According to clear Bible passages, God desires us to be selfless, not selfish.
 - a. Paul wrote, “*Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being.*” (I Corinthians 10:24, NKJV)
 - b. Paul wrote, “*Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*” (Philippians 2:4, NKJV) Paul then used Jesus Christ as the greatest of examples of selflessness. (Philippians 2:5-8)
 2. In II Timothy 3:2, Paul warned Timothy about the ungodliness of those men who are selfish or lovers of themselves. He told Timothy to turn away from such men. (II Timothy 3:2-5)
- B. Each spouse is to selflessly provide for the needs of their mate.
 1. Provide for their emotional needs. (i.e. need for self-worth, need to feel appreciated, need for compassion, need for sympathy, need for kindness, need to be built up or lift up, need for friendship, etc.)
 2. Provide for their affectionate needs. (I Peter 3:7; Ephesians 5:25-29; Titus 2:4)
 3. Provide for their intimate (sexual) needs. (I Corinthians 7:2-5)
 4. Provide for their physical needs. (Food, clothing, dwelling, etc.)
- C. When one or the other spouse is selfish, the marriage relationship will suffer and

many needs will go unfulfilled. However, when both the husband and the wife possess the quality of selflessness, then all needs will be met and the marriage will be protected.

III. STEP THREE: DO NOT ABUSE YOUR SPOUSE.

- A. Consider the following definitions:
1. Abusive is defined as “1. involving or characterized by abuse or misuse; abusing; mistreating 2. coarse and insulting in language; scurrilous; harshly scolding” (Webster’s New World Dictionary)
 2. Abuse is defined as “1. to use wrongly; misuse 2. to hurt by treating badly; mistreat 3. to use insulting, coarse, or bad language about or to; scold harshly; revile” (Webster’s New World Dictionary)
- B. It is important to note that there are three forms of abuse within a marriage relationship: Physical abuse, mental abuse, and emotional abuse.
- C. It is a sin for either the husband or the wife to abuse their spouse.
1. If a husband abuses his wife, he is then in sin, having violated I Peter 3:7 and Ephesians 5:28-29.
 2. If a wife abuses her husband, she is then in sin and in violation of Ephesians 5:22-24,33 and Titus 2:4-5.
- D. A Christian cannot be abusive and stay in fellowship with God.
1. Romans 1:28-32 classifies violence, strife, and unmerciful as being acts of the ungodly. If a Christian is abusive to his spouse, then he is living ungodly. If he is living ungodly, then he is not in fellowship with God. (Cf. I John 1:5-7)
 2. Galatians 5:19-21 teaches that hatred, wrath, and strife will keep people out of the kingdom of Heaven.
- E. When husbands and wives talk to each other, they should let their speech be seasoned with salt, not with hurtful and abusive words.
1. Colossians 4:6 teaches that our speech is to be seasoned with salt, that which preserves and flavors. The “every man” referred to in the verse would include the husband and the wife.
 2. Ephesians 4:29 teaches us to use only that speech which will edify or build up the hearer. The “hearers” include the husband and the wife.
- F. To avoid abusive behavior, the husband and the wife should apply the lessons taught in Romans 12:9-21.

1. *“Let love be without hypocrisy.”* (vs 9)
 2. *“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;”* (vs 10)
 3. *“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.”* (vs 14)
 4. *“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”* (vs 15)
 5. *“Be of the same mind toward one another . . .”* (vs 16)
 6. *“Do not be wise in your own opinion.”* (vs 16)
 7. *“Repay no one evil for evil.”* (vs 17)
 8. *“Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.”* (vs 17)
 9. *“If it is possible, . . . live peaceably with all men.”* (vs 18)
 10. *“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.”* (vs 19)
 11. *“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”* (vs 21)
- G. If the husband and the wife will avoid any and all types of abusive behavior or speech, then the marriage will be protected.

IV. STEP FOUR: REMAIN FAITHFUL TO YOUR SPOUSE.

- A. Of all people, Christians should understand what it means to be faithful. Our relationship with our Heavenly Father is that of faithfulness. We are to worship no other gods. We are to put no one or nothing in front of our service to God. We have learned from the error of Israel. We know what it means to be faithful.
- B. When a man and woman marry, they are making a commitment to remain faithful to each other.
1. “For better or worse, for richer or poorer, through sickness and in health, till death do us part.”
 2. Failure to do so is sin.
- C. The bride and the groom make promises. For instance:
1. They promise to love their spouse above all else.
 - a. More than their mother and father.
 - b. More than their brothers and sisters.
 - c. More than their friends.
 - d. More than anyone else in the world.

2. They promise to selflessly put the needs, wants and desires of their spouse above their own needs, wants, and desires.
 - a. The physical needs.
 - b. The emotional needs.
 - c. The sexual needs.
 3. They promise to love, honor, and cherish their spouse. The promise to never abuse or intentionally hurt their spouse.
- D. God expects the marriage partners to be truthful when making the commitments, thereby honoring those commitments.
- E. If the husband and wife will be faithful to their promises and their commitments, then their marriage will be protected.
- F. One Important Note: While not being faithful to your promises and commitments can destroy your relationship, there is only one area of unfaithfulness wherein Jesus granted the option for the marriage to be terminated. That area is sexual unfaithfulness, or fornication.
1. Let us take just a moment to explain the responsibility of the spouse to provide for the sexual needs of their mate.
 - a. I Corinthians 7:1-5 teaches us that there are sexual needs or needs of passion which must be met.
 - (1) Verse 2 reads, *“Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.”* (NKJV)
 - (2) From verses 2-5, we understand that the “needs” to which Paul referred are the sexual needs and desires.
 - (3) The wife has power over her husband’s body, thereby indicating that the husband has the responsibility of fulfilling her desires.
 - (4) The husband has power over the wife’s body, thereby indicating that the wife has the responsibility of fulfilling his desires.
 - (5) Note: To fulfill those sexual desires or needs outside of the marriage is considered fornication. However, when two people marry, the fulfilling of those sexual desires is no longer considered fornication.

- b. Hebrews 13:4 declares the marriage to be honorable and the bed undefiled.
 - (1) The Greek word for bed is: koite {koy'-tay} which means, "1) a place for laying down, resting, sleeping in . . . 2) the marriage bed . . . 3) cohabitation, whether lawful or unlawful 3a) sexual intercourse" (Enhanced Strong's Lexicon)
 - (2) Within the marriage relationship, sexual activity does not defile the bed. It is lawful for the husband and wife to fulfill the sexual needs of their spouses.
- 2. The fulfilling of these sexual needs must be limited to the marriage relationship.
 - a. To have someone else other than your spouse fulfill your sexual needs is sinful.
 - b. To fulfill someone another person's sexual needs, other than your spouse is equally sinful.
- 3. Outside the marriage, such actions are called fornication. Both are a violation of the trust between you and your spouse. Both are acts of unfaithfulness.
- 4. If a spouse commits fornication, then their mate can divorce them, ending the marriage relationship. (Matthew 5:32; 19:9)
- 5. To help avoid temptations of unfaithfulness towards your spouse, consider some warnings and precautions:
 - a. Do not allow yourself to develop an attraction to someone else. If someone else treats you better than your spouse, take care that you do not allow yourself to become attracted to that person.
 - b. Do not fantasize about someone else.
 - c. Love your spouse and only your spouse. If a husband or wife does not love their spouse with the love required by the scriptures, then they may find themselves in situations where their relationship may be compromised by lust. At that point, instead of protecting their marriage, they are destroying their marriage.
- G. Remember, faithfulness to your spouse will help to protect the most precious gift that God has given man and woman.
- H. Faithfulness will protect the marriage union.

CONCLUSION.

- A. There are many problems which can rattle or even destroy a marriage. In this lesson we have shown four steps to protecting your marriage. They are:
 - 1. Love Your Spouse.
 - 2. Possess Selflessness
 - 3. Avoid Abusive Behavior
 - 4. Remain Faithful

- B. Ultimately, the first step in not only establishing a marriage, but protecting the marriage, is love for your spouse.
 - 1. Once love is in place, then selflessness will follow.
 - 2. When selflessness is in place, there will be no room for abusive behavior.
 - 3. At this point, remaining faithful will seem obvious and natural.
 - 4. With love the marriage will have a strong foundation. Without love, the marriage will crumble.

- C. If you find that your marriage is missing any of these protections, then work together to add them to your life and your marriage.
 - 1. An unloving husband or wife can become loving.
 - 2. A selfish husband or wife can become selfless or unselfish.
 - 3. An abusive husband or wife can replace that abusive behavior with loving affection and kindness.
 - 4. An unfaithful spouse can change to become trustworthy.

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