

Principles of a happy marriage

Study 2 - Grace and mercy

I had not expected to write a series on marriage, but as I started, I suddenly realised that it would only be right for me to share a success story for your blessing. There are far too many tragic stories out there. So much so, that many people, I'm sure, are thinking that it is not possible with all the pressures in this life, to have a happy marriage. Well, I want you to know that it is possible. And not only is it possible for someone out there to be happy, but it is also very possible for you to pick your broken marriage up and see God change it into something soft and lovely and peaceful. Hence my reason for sharing some of the things which I believe have contributed to our happiness.

I must tell you from the outset that I believe in God. I believe in His holy Word, the Bible. And I believe that He is the Creator of heaven and earth, and that He therefore knows us intimately. He knows our physical frame. He knows our emotional makeup. He knows our needs, physical and spiritual, and He cares.

Because of His personal care for you and me, He arranged for the Bible to be written as an instruction manual for our lives. The principles upon which my marriage is built, is therefore solidly based on that "*instruction manual*", and I believe that the Bible is entirely sufficient to give us specific direction for *every* aspect of life that we might come across. The instructions in the Bible usually come in the form of principles, and the following principle has been a blessing

to me through most of my married life. I fortunately learned it at an early stage.

*Eph 4:29 "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may **give grace** to those who hear."*

The Bible has a lot to say about the tongue - or the words that proceed from our mouths. We read the following from the Psalms:

Psa 140:3 "... who sharpen their tongues as a serpent; poison of a viper is under their lips".

Prov 12:18 "There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."

How powerful the tongue is! It can build or destroy; make or break. I'm not going to speak much about the breaking part - that is pretty obvious - and we see it happen all around us - and there are many Scriptures about it. I want to rather speak about the building part. The Scripture in Ephesians 4:29 above gives us something very positive to meditate on. What are *unwholesome words*? The word *wholesome* gives the idea of *fullness, fatness, health*. *Unwholesome* would then be the opposite. These are not necessarily even particularly bad words - they are just not good - like little remarks which would tend to cut someone down or make a person feel bad. Teenagers are usually experts at this, and though words are often said as a joke, they nevertheless hurt deeply.

The old saying, "*Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me,*" is not the truth. Words hurt. Long after the physical wound of a stick or stone has been healed, the deep emotional wounds of words still linger on. At any moment an event can trigger the hurt and cause a sudden reaction from the hurting person.

"LET NO unwholesome word ..." indicates that the flow of words from our mouth is *under our control*. We can *switch it on* or *turn it off*. If it is unwholesome, then just turn it off - no matter how funny it might sound to you or how much the other person has provoked you. **TURN IT OFF!**

Then the Scripture tells us what part to turn on - *words that edify, giving grace to the hearer*. Well, we know that to edify means to build someone up. But what does grace mean? *Unmerited favour* is the meaning preachers usually give us from the pulpits. What does this mean?

Simply this: You give someone favour who absolutely does not deserve it. Put this in the context of our subject - speaking words to someone - say to your spouse. Say your spouse has just said something or done something which really hurt you or annoyed you. What is your response? You return words that favour her beyond what she deserves (again I am ministering from the husband point of view - you ladies can glean from this whatever you may and be blessed by it).

Imagine returning a soft kind word to your wife when she has just given you something harsh! How do you think she would respond? I always remember that Jesus showed me mercy when I did not deserve it. My wife has

also showed me mercy at times when I have struggled with temptation. I am deeply indebted to her for lifting me up when I almost fell, and her gentleness in praying me through difficulties, causes me to love her even more.

Be honest - it takes two to fight. If the fighting mood comes from one side only, and the other side only returns gentle words and kind gestures, the fight won't last very long! If you make this a life-habit, you will find that harsh words are never spoken in the home at all. I have never lifted my hand to my wife, and I have never shouted at her, and I've never used bad language in our home. I just don't do it! No tribute to me. The Lord taught me that through His Word. And what a blessing it has been in our home!

That does not mean that I have been right all the time. I'm no saint! I have often been wrong, and my wife has on occasions strongly pointed out my wrongdoings. No one likes to be told off.

Correction is not easy to accept. I have seen this in my own life and learned that if I am wrong, no matter how strongly I might like to react to being told off, it is far better to admit my wrong quickly and ask forgiveness from my wife or children than to argue and stand my ground. It quickly resolves the issue. However, if I am right, based on a Scriptural principle, I will stand my ground, but in gentleness. If my wife still does not agree with me. I will not press the issue. I then rather revert to praying for her that the Lord would reveal the truth to her. It does not take long before she sees the truth, and that, without an argument. We just don't fight.

Disagreements are dealt with gently and are resolved quickly.

A home free of fighting is very possible. *You* can have it. It might take some time to learn the principles, and you might trip up a few times, but I know that God answers prayer. He will answer your prayers. If you are willing to go all the way with Him, He will go all the way with you. He is a good God. You can trust Him.

Gal 6:7 "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

Gal 6:8 "For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Gal 6:9 "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary."

These Scriptures are God's way – His promises to us. If you are willing to walk with Him all the way and keep His laws – His ways – then He will also walk the road with you, and you will reap according to the Spirit an abundance of life and certainly a happy marriage. God is good. You can trust Him.