

Principles of a happy marriage

Study 3 - The gender issue

Thank you for the comments received on my last article regarding gender. I apologise for not explaining. You see, I'm a man. All my experiences have been from that perspective. When I teach, I like to teach from personal experience, and though I can tell you what the Bible says about the woman's roll in marriage, I am not able to minister that with conviction as I have never experienced what it must be like to submit to a husband. I can only say what it is like for me as a husband to have a wife who is a strong person - a teacher in her own right - but who voluntarily places herself in submission to me. And yes, her actions have been a large part of the reason why we have a successful and peaceful marriage.

Again, I must emphasise that our success is not because we are such great people - because we're not. We are just very ordinary folk with a simple home - our choice. The success has all to do with a great God who designed marriage and wrote down the principles of marriage in His Word - the Bible. We have simply followed the rules.

50/50

Speaking of gender, though, I must say that I do not agree with the common philosophy that marriage is a 50/50 thing. I understand by that philosophy, that each partner should contribute 50% to the marriage. I believe, rather that marriage is a 100/100 thing. To me, the 50/50 thing sounds too selfish. *I have given my 50%, now where is yours?* There is no man or woman alive

who can with all honesty say that they are always feeling 100%, and therefore always able to contribute their share fully. Consequently, if each share is only 50%, and the day comes when you are feeling weak for some reason or other and can't make up your full share, there's a problem in the home.

No, I rather believe that God wants the man to contribute 100% of his responsibility in the home - to fulfil God's calling and requirement for his ministry as a man. Likewise, the wife should contribute 100% in the fulfilling of her responsibility as a wife. Now should there be any weakness from either side and either of the two partners are not able to fulfil their full duty, then that beautiful Scripture comes into action,

Ecc 4:9 "Two are better than one ... for if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion ..."

We all have our times of weakness, and that is the time when the partner's 100% covers the 80% or 50%, or even in extreme cases the 0% from the other partner. The Scripture continues by saying,

Ecc 4:10 "... But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up."

Will you lift your partner up in times of their weakness, or will you criticise and complain because of the extra load that you now have to bear?

God made us male and female. He did not make us unisex. He made us different. Those who try to advocate that there are no differences between male and female have, I believe, been blinded by the enemy of our souls

(with respect to those who hold such opinions). We are different. In the Olympics, males and females compete separately. To have them compete against each other would be unfair advantage for the men. These competitions are arranged in this way in recognition of the physical fact that males are, generally speaking, stronger than females. The Scripture says that females are the "*weaker vessels*" and as such should be *given honour*.

*1Pet 3:7 "You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman, and **grant her honour** as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."*

So, we are different. Just because the woman is the weaker vessel, though, it does not mean that the husband should dominate her or look down on her and treat her as a servant. No, you are a team together. I love the way the Scripture says we should "*grant her honour*". The old gentlemanly way of opening the car door for her, waiting for her to go through a door first, rising and giving her a seat, are some of the small ways in which you can grant her honour. Recognising her times of weakness and controlling your own feelings and conversation in such times are other ways of showing her honour.

In typical men's gatherings, I have often heard men speak disparagingly about their wives, and I have felt so sorry for the poor wife. If he thinks so lowly of her in front of other men, what must go on in their homes? I will not speak negatively about or mock my wife, whether she is present or not. She is too special to me

for me to drag her through the dirt. I honour her, and in turn she respects me, and our relationship is beautiful.

These are some of the principles I have learned from God's Word. There are many theories which people have, and the gender issue is something which people feel strongly about. I see in God's Word that we have different roles to play. This has been designed by God to make the marriage work peacefully the way He intended it to. If you have a different opinion, well that's OK.

May I ask you very gently and lovingly, do you argue and fight in your home? Can you honestly say you have peace all the time? If not, then with respect to you, I do not believe your opinion comes with much authority because it is not working. I have tried God's way, and after 45 years of happiness, I can say with authority that it has worked for me. We fulfil different roles in our home, we lift each other up, honour and respect each other, and love each other more and more as the years roll by.

This seems to be developing into a series. I hope it is a help to many of you who are hurting. A beautiful marriage *is possible!* You can have it too. Just remember that you cannot expect things to go differently in your home if you keep on doing things the same old way. If you want different results, you must have different actions. A new harvest will of necessity require the planting of a fresh batch of seeds.

The stronger your marriage is - shown in the gentleness with which you treat each other - the more effective your performance will be outside the home. May this time of pressure be a time of strengthening of all our marriages.

With special love to you all,

Henry Jackson