

The Bulletproof Marriage: Week 2

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.” Ephesians 5:31-32

God, in the original creation, created an environment of Honor, Love and Respect that was designed as a place where relationship, with Him, and with each other, could thrive.

Sin perverted that environment, replacing Honor, Love and Respect with Hiding, Blame and Faultfinding, and Control.

Jesus came to restore all things, making them new again, and giving us the power to “create” an environment where our marriages, and our other relationships, will once again thrive.

By looking at the first couple, we can discover the foundational issues of most marriage problems. By leaning into Jesus’ Word, and by the power of His Spirit, we can proactively create an environment where our marriage thrives, and God is honored:

HIDING:

Genesis 3:7 At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

If spouses are hiding their spending habits, there’s trouble. If we’re hiding computer activities, there’s trouble. If we’re hiding our whereabouts during business travel, there’s trouble. When we hide any level of relationship with the opposite sex, there is trouble.

Hiding is part of the sinful condition, and it is the first thing to show up when marriages start to fall apart. When we hide stuff from our spouses, we’ve already started hiding from God. Bottom line is we’ll just stop talking to Him.

Notice in the first couple’s attempt to hide, the leaves were already dying and withering as soon as they disconnected them from the plant. Whenever we disconnect from our life source to try and cover hiding, death has begun its process.

LIVE YOUR LIFE AS IF THERE ARE NO SECRETS:

Jesus promises us that whatever is done in secret will be shouted from the rooftops. So make sure your spouse is never surprised, except in the good way!

Can you both access each other’s phones, tablets, emails, etc?

Be sensitive to your spouse and be respectful of the boundaries you agree on.

If you meet attractive people at work, make sure your spouse is the first to know.

If an old “flame” initiates a contact, share the conversation with your spouse.

If you can’t talk about something openly, then you don’t need to be doing it in the first place. Secrets are dangerous, period.

If there is an issue or source of tension, healthy couples find ways to discuss these things with their spouse in a way that doesn’t threaten the relationship.

And when they get good news, like an unexpected promotion at work, they're excited to tell their spouse. They don't have to worry about coming across as boastful or making their spouse feel jealous or inferior.

They feel safe in the knowledge that their spouse loves and respects them enough to both celebrate their successes and work through difficulties with them. It is a relationship where speaking one's mind doesn't feel risky; it feels healthy. (***Naked and unashamed***)

Practical Tools:

- **The Monthly "Clean Out" Session.**
- **Make your spouse your most important accountability partner (Companionship)**

BLAME and FAULT-FINDING:

Genesis 3:12-13 The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it." Then the Lord God asked the woman, "What have you done?" "The serpent deceived me," she replied. "That's why I ate it."

Justification and rationalization are the automatic human responses to our sin.

The way we use the "always" and the "never" words when we are in conflict shows that we are hopelessly addicted to shifting blame even when some things may be our fault.

A spouse may have even violated his or her marriage vows by carrying on an affair. If ever there was a time for a spouse to say, "I have dealt you a terrible injustice! Please forgive me." it's then.

But when the confrontation takes place, many spouses will say something like this: "It's your fault. You drove me to it by your incessant criticisms." "It's your fault. You lured me into it by your workaholic, never-at-home lifestyle." "It's your fault. Your perfectionism has made me feel completely inadequate."

MAKE ROOM FOR GRACE AND MERCY BY THINKING THE BEST OF EACH OTHER:

Couples who love and respect each other, and their marriage, assume positive intent. When their spouse disappoints them or hurts their feelings, they don't jump to conclusions like "They only care about themselves" or "If they loved me more, they wouldn't have done that".

Instead, they start the conversation by saying, "I know you didn't mean to hurt my feelings, but I want you to know that I felt hurt when you did _____."

Then the conversation can quickly move on to attending to the hurt feelings or problem-solving, so it doesn't happen again.

This approach allows couples to be more forgiving with each other and helps both parties move forward more quickly.

Practical Tools:

- “It feels like” instead of “It is”
- Take responsibility for your actions.
- “You might be right.”

POWER/CONTROL ISSUES:

Genesis 3:16 “...And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.”

Spouses control each other to get our needs met.

A woman will feel frustrated that her husband is not meeting her deep needs for relationship, and she will seek to control him, trying to get those needs met.

But men usually have the opposite problem. God says, “But your husband will rule over you.” Men don’t want to be controlled. When a man starts feeling controlled, he does two things: he gets aggressive and powers up into fighting mode; or he withdraws into an angry punishing silence. Men will try to rule over their wives by seesawing back and forth between aggression and withdrawal.

Jesus said His Kingdom is different—instead of seeking to rule over others we will serve others. (**Matt 23:11**)

Remember, my spouse is not my ‘need-meeter’—Jesus is!

CREATE A CULTURE OF HONOR:

Honor God and honor your spouse and you’ll find life is pretty good.

Serve each other instead of looking out for yourself. (*Give and it shall be given...*)

When you argue, change your goal from winning the argument to honoring your spouse. Your goal is that no matter the subject of disagreement, your spouse leaves the argument honored, not dishonored.

Work on communication skills and keep working on them. Whenever your spouse walks into the room, stop what you are doing and honor them.

Practical Tools:

- Always honor, not dishonor (*even jokingly*), your spouse around others.
- Avoid ‘complaining’ or ‘comparing’, even internally. Instead, focus on gratefulness.

CONCLUSION

“Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem” Luke 9:51 (NKJV)

Honor, Love and Respect doesn’t happen accidentally. Great marriages don’t just magically appear. They are the result of **intentionality**.

Anything left alone, will move toward disorder and chaos. No relationship stands still—it is either moving forward or backing up.

Be intentional about love and respect for each other. Be intentional about respecting marriage and the marriage bed.

- Pray for each other.
- Focus on “what’s right about you”
- Create “we time”
- Invest in each other and what each of you like
- Listen to hear. *“He’s restless. We need to plan a trip.” “She’s scared. She doesn’t need an answer, she just needs me to hear and hold her.”*

Above all, be intentional about putting Christ in the middle of your marriage. SET YOUR FACE to have a great marriage.