

Relationship Skills Building (RSB): What is Marriage?

Marriage is a lifetime commitment amongst two people who should be in love. Marrying to “fix problems”-social or selfish, emotional, family pressure, or even pregnancy-should never be considered.

Marriage makes one person, and as a consequence this one human relationship, more valued than any other. The longer you are married the more you invest in each other, giving all you have. Love is compassion and being tenderly involved with one another. Love demands involvement; you can't love without doing. Love is sharing, giving of yourself. The greatest marriages are bonds between people who are not trying to see what they can get out of the marriage but what they can put into the relationship.

Expectations-What do you intend to put into this marriage? What do I expect to get out of this marriage? Is marriage a source of sex? Yes, of course it is. Is it a source of spiritual fulfillment? It can be. Is it companionship? Yes, that is also involved? Expectations determine fulfillment. When we don't get what we expect, we are not satisfied.

Examining Perspective

God has made a decision for you. You had no say in the matter; but He must have a reason for it. Have you ever considered why you are a man or a woman? We have been appointed to be what we are. Along with any appointment comes certain responsibility. God has appointed men to be leaders, defenders, and providers. That is not say a women could not function in any of these roles. Many women have been forced to become something they may have not chosen for themselves because of men failing to be what God wants them to be. There are God given roles that have been appointed to each gender. The bible calls this nature.

Isaiah 3:9; Romans 1:20-21

When men fail to live in submission to God, they eventually give themselves over to unnatural affections.

Romans 1:26-32

The most natural state for a man is to be dependent on God. When men live independently of God they are in an unnatural state of being. This is reflected in society by men loving men, women loving women, and children becoming leaders. Homosexuality is being addressed in Romans 1:20-32; however the

primary issue is independence from God. When a man lives in an unnatural state that which is unnatural becomes seemingly natural or a “new normal”.

The Church must be careful; when the Church is prayerless many things that were once called sin are no longer considered off-limits at all. The Church is just as wrong in justifying its worldliness as the homosexual is in defending his attraction to the same sex.

God's Nature

God has made His nature very clear to us. Paul says that God has revealed His nature from “what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” Since we are created in His image, His nature should not be a difficult thing for us to grasp. There is naturalness that comes to both women and men. However, if we fail to glorify God our thinking becomes futile and our hearts are darkened.

Isaiah 3:9... “they parade their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! They have brought disaster upon themselves.”(NIV) They have become proud of their sin. The homosexual has come out of the closet and has attempted to gain some level of respect in society. The problem with accepting this as normal means that the normal nature of a man has been altered. Completely contrary to the word of God.

Woman Leadership in a Relationship Context/Perspective

Women taking position of leadership in the home brings a complete reversal of roles. Society then becomes quite twisted. “Youths oppress my people, women rule over them. My people, your guides lead you astray; they turn you from the path.” (Isaiah 3:12) NIV. “Your guides lead you astray.” This is referring to the leadership of the woman. This does not mean that women do not have the capability of leading; this is dealing with the unnaturalness of this particular situation. The reason the women are leading is because the men have failed in their responsibilities of leadership. It is not that women can't lead; it's that God has designed the man to be a leader and when he fails, those who replace him are misled in their leadership.

Consider this: men lead from a position of risk and faith, while women lead from a position of safety and security. Because men are providers by nature, they tend to lead from that perspective. Men are somewhat predisposed to taking a more relaxed outlook in leadership matters because they have an inner sense of being able to come up with whatever they will need for whatever situation may come up. They may not really be able to supply whatever they need, however that tends to be their approach.

Women differ by nature in leadership. God has created the woman with a need for security and she regularly leads from that perspective. What we are dealing with here are tendencies, not inevitabilities. It certainly is possible to find both men and women that are exceptions in their leadership styles.

The difference in leadership styles is reflected in how women and men mature. It is very typical for a young girl to mature quicker than a young boy. The average male sees maturity as something he will work at when he needs to, whereas the average female sees maturity as something she needs to achieve. The male leads from a similar perspective. When the time comes he will do whatever he needs to do. The female leads from a different perspective. Her outlook comes from her need for security, subsequently she prepares much sooner.

Men lead from a faith perspective that says, “whatever we need will be there when we need it.” Women lead from a security perspective that says, “Everything must be in place in case we need it.”

The Need For Security

Typically a woman gains security from her husband’s relationship with God. If she is married to a man that does not seek God, she tends to become insecure. From her insecurity she then tries to control her world. This tendency often guides a woman to focus more on social issues when they are in positions of authority, than a male would. This may make the woman sound weak, but actually it is simply a different natural role manifesting itself.

A woman’s need for security should actually work to her advantage; IF her husband loves her the way Christ loves the Church. (Eph. 5:25) If a man actually loves his wife the way he is supposed to, then his wife’s needs will drive him to a deeper pursuit of God. If he understands that her security comes from his relationship with God that will continually push him toward God.

Grace versus Law Perspective

“...your guides lead you astray” (Isaiah 3:12). Naturally speaking, women represent grace while men represent the law. Grace covers sin, the law reveals sin. “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.” (Gen.3:6). Eve ate the fruit and thought nothing of it. Then she gave some to her husband and he ate it also. Consider what happened after Adam ate the fruit “Then

the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves” (Gen 3:7). “Then the eyes of both of them were opened...” Eve represents grace. Grace covers sin. Grace does not see wrongdoing. Adam represents the law. The law reveals sin. It was not until Adam ate of the fruit that their eyes were opened and they saw that what they did was wrong.

Roles, Responsibilities, and Decision Making

What about the question of roles and responsibilities in marriage? Who does what and why? Does he or she do it? Is it because of tradition or because of what the church has said? Or is it because that is the way it was done in your parents' home?

Failure to clarify the husband/wife roles in a relationship is a major cause of marital disruption. As a couple you will be involved in an almost endless number of activities and responsibilities. Each couple should discuss together and decide who is most competent to do each task. Tasks should not be assigned on the basis of parental example, the expectations of your social group, or tradition. When an individual's abilities, training, and temperament make it difficult or unnecessary to follow an established cultural norm for a role, the couple will need to have the strength to establish their own style of working together. It is imperative that a couple deliberately and mutually develop the rules and guidelines for their relationship as husband and wife. This clear assignment of authority and responsibility does not create a rigid relationship but allows flexibility and order in what could become a chaotic mess. Spend some time thinking about your role as a wife or husband.

Woman's Place- Where Are You?"

Property-wife has almost no rights and privileges compared to those of the husband. Husband is the family provider. Often the wife is merely a chattel for the husband's sexual expression.

Complement-wife's rights have increased. Marriage is the wife's central life interest. Husband is chief provider and has more authority than wife. She is a friend to her husband. He achieves and she supports him.

Junior Partner-wife's rights increase because she works outside the home for pay. Her main motive is to improve the family's lifestyle. She has more authority (rights) than a nonworking woman.

Equal Partner-wife and husband share equal rights and responsibilities.