

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

by

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CHAPTER FOUR

PRACTICAL COUNSELS OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

I Corinthians 13; Colossians 3:12-25; Ephesians 4:17-32; Matthew 5:1-16

RECOGNIZE BASIC DIFFERENCES

REMEMBER THE DIFFERENCE between the sexes. Man is man, woman is woman. There are basic and fundamental differences in their makeup, their personalities, and outlook on life.

The man usually approaches life from the level of cold reason, whereas woman lives more in her affections and emotions. Failure to understand this basic difference is responsible for much tension and friction in households. The chief temptation of the man is to become bitter at the woman because of her way of reasoning and her approach to life. That is why God has especially commanded, “**Husbands love your wives, and be not bitter against them**” (Colossians 3:19). The tendency is so deep and the temptation so strong that God has again commanded it in 1 Peter 3:7.

It is always well to remember that reason without emotion would be cold, hard, and lifeless; and emotion without reason would be unguided, unprofitable, and destructive. Thus husband and wife complement each other and become instruments of growth and grace to each other. The woman is tempted to become provoked at her husband’s cold, rational approach to life, and that is why God has especially commanded her in Ephesians 5:33, “**And the wife see that she reverence her husband.**” Bitterness and irreverence are the two basic temptations to husband and wife respectively—basic because they have reference to the basic differences of the masculine and feminine personalities. Husband and wife should be diligently on the lookout and should make it a matter of persevering prayer that they may not enter into temptation.

DON’T LIVE WITH PARENTS

In ancient times, parents gave a dowry to their daughter when she married. The express purpose of the dowry was that the young married couple might have sufficient resources to set up a home of their own. It might be wise to restore this custom. Friction is sure to develop if a young couple attempts to live under a parent’s roof. The adjustments and problems of two young lives seeking to live and grow together are great enough without adding more. Jesus said, “**For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife.**”

Christ demands this separation from parents at the time of marriage. Those who refuse to obey this divine commandment and allow themselves to remain with their parents “just for a few months until we can get on our feet,” live to regret this disobedience.

Begin marriage away from parents in your own room or apartment just with each other and Jesus!

GIVE AND RECEIVE ADMONITION

When we think there is a real fault in our loved one, what shall we do? Shall we immediately decide upon admonishing the offending member? No, we think it is much the better part of wisdom to walk softly and carefully seek to know the mind of the Lord.

We should pray first. We should pray for our offending loved one. It is remarkable how a personality will change under the quickening power of someone’s prevailing prayer of faith. An elderly man after being saved prayed for his wife who was subject to spells of jealousy. As he prayed for her in the quiet of his closet he discovered two things:

(1) he found himself able to keep sweetly quiet while she spent the fury of her jealousy in many harsh words; we cannot speak harsh words to one for whom we are praying,

(2) after he had prayed for his wife for many weeks, he found her spells of jealousy lessening in intensity, duration, and frequency. Finally they ceased altogether.

Under the blessing of his daily loving prayer for his wife, her life was beautifully changed. Prayer for our loved one opens that life to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. As we continue praying, He continues working upon that life until the complete victory is won.

Then we must seek for understanding of our loved one’s faults. Frequently the cause of a fault needs changing rather than the person.

Many a person’s disagreeable ways rest upon causes that are hidden even from the offender himself. Such causes may be:

- (1) wounded pride;
- (2) a lurking sense of inadequacy and inferiority;
- (3) a deep sense of fear;
- (4) physical fatigue and rundown condition;
- (5) a deep sorrow that may have turned to bitterness through the years;
- (6) loneliness.

If any of these reasons are behind the faults of your loved one, pray accordingly and do whatever else you find possible to relieve the condition. Above all, show love and understanding, for “**charity [love] never faileth.**”

If, after much prayer and study one feels it wise to speak a word of counsel to the loved one, let it be in the spirit of I Corinthians 13 and Galatians 6:1-3. We believe the counsel of Pastor Byfield on the giving and receiving of admonition will be helpful at this point.

In performing admonition we must especially look to two things: First, that the ground of admonition be out of the Word of God, being the words of Christ, not our own words. To this end we should store ourselves and hold fast the faithful word according to doctrine. Secondly, we must see that the manner of admonition be right. Admonition is to be performed: First, with innocency; we must not be faulty ourselves, or if we have been we must plainly acknowledge it before we admonish. Second, with discretion, which must be shown in two things:

(a) That we are sure that they have offended; not led to it by the suspicion of our own hearts or by hearsay or by outward appearance, but judge by the hearing of our ears and the sight of our eyes.

(b) We must know it to be an offense; we must consider whether it be of the number of those offenses a wise man must hold his glory to pass by (Proverbs 19:11).

(c) Third, it must be done seasonably, with love, admonishing as a brother (II Thessalonians 3:5);

(d) Fourth, with meekness (Galatians 6:1);

(e) Fifth, with secrecy (Matthew 18:15; Proverbs 25:9);

(f) Sixth with plainness—spare no words to satisfy them (Leviticus 19:17);

(g) Seventh, with compassion and tenderness (II Corinthians 2: 4);

(h) Eighth, with perseverance, we must not be weary and discouraged, but accomplish it (Proverbs 13:19);

(i) Ninthly, with all authority (Titus 2:1) that neither ourselves nor God's ordinances be defiled.

In receiving admonition we must

(a) Receive it with love and self-examination (I Thessalonians 5:12).

(b) With all humility, readily inclined to suspect ourselves, knowing we have cause to say and think of ourselves as that worthy man did, **“I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man”** (Proverbs 30:2; I Thessalonians 5:12; Proverbs 30:2, 3).

(c) With subjection and direct acknowledgment, giving glory to God.

(d) With reformation, else all is in vain.

ACCEPT EACH OTHER

Husband and wife must accept each other as they are in the present, with all their virtues and faults. Every human being is faulty and frail. One of the great purposes of marriage is growth. Each is to be a means of grace, encouragement, and help to the other that both may grow in the likeness and image of Christ.

The apostle Paul sets forth the true spirit and attitude of marriage in II Timothy 2:24-26 and Colossians 3:12-17. You will notice the passage in Colossians directly precedes Paul's statement addressed to wives, husbands, children, and fathers. This whole passage is to be the spirit and attitude of each member of the family toward the other. With this deep, rich, spiritual attitude prevailing, all are accepted as they are that they might grow to be more like Him in thought, word, and deed. Every husband and wife should read, memorize, pray over, and meditate upon Colossians 3:12-17 with such frequency that its spirit will be their spirit toward each other. This is truly the spirit of each for all and all for each.

DO NOT TALK ABOUT OR REVEAL FAULTS AND SINS OF THE PAST

Only a misguided sense of loyalty would cause wife or husband to reveal faults and sins of the past at the feet of a loved one. God's Word is clear that we are to forget "**those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before**" (see Philippians 3:12-15).

True love should be above all such unwise curiosity about the past. If two people truly love each other, they should take each other for what they are now. The past should be forgiven and forgotten automatically. True love and true Christian faith rise above all suspicions of the past and see others as they are before God in the cleansing blood of Christ— clean, justified, accepted in the Beloved. Let us ever keep our eyes on what we are in Christ (1 John 3: 1-3; Colossians 2:9; 1:21) and where we are in Christ (Colossians 2:11-15; Ephesians 2:13-22).

Instead of husband and wife dwelling on the possible mistakes, sins, and shortcomings of the past, let them rather pray that God will show them what they are today, being in Christ. Let them pray with Paul that great prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21. What manner of persons we are in Christ! We should never be desirous of returning to the flesh pots of Egypt in memory or conversation, for that would surely grieve the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 4:29-30) and fill the life with bitterness (Ephesians 4:31). It is wise to forget the past and let the attitude be as the Holy Spirit has commanded: "**And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you**" (Ephesians 4:32).

DON'T TATTLE FAMILY SECRETS

Guard your loved one's reputation with all diligence and hide every fault away in your heart and at the throne of grace. Somehow your loved one will sense your faithfulness and will trust you with unwavering confidence. And this is the very cornerstone of love.

Miriam's sin was that of gossip.

Miriam professed to be offended with Zipporah, the Ethiopian wife of Moses. The Lord saw it and rebuked her, saying, "**Wherefore were ye not afraid to speak against Moses?**" God says people should be afraid to speak against another in private and behind his back. Why? Because God sees it and will judge it. He smote Miriam with leprosy, until, utterly humiliated and deeply humbled, she repented. God healed her after she had repented.

Let there be no Miriams in our households. Let not the in-laws nor any of the relatives be like Miriam in respect to criticism.

R. E. Baldwin says: "Full well I know that but few intend to be guilty of the sin of detraction— Miriam's sin. I know with many it is the result of thoughtlessness; but its influence extends much farther than they ever imagine; it excites prejudices in the young who hear it, which will live long after those who uttered it are dead; it wrings many innocent hearts, and they and God only know the bitter tears that are shed on account of it."

Full oft a word that lightly leaves the tongue,
Another heart unnecessarily has wrung;
And were the wound but present to the eye,
We'd mourn the pain that solace might defy.
Was it a taunt, perhaps a thoughtless jest,
An idle ripple on the vacant breast?
But thy shafts may yield a venom'd death—
What need to speed them but a little breath!
We toy with hearts as if the thousand chords,
That vibrate to the touch of hasty words,
Could join our discords all the livelong day,
Nor any tension cause them to give way.

Oh, strike them gently; every human breast
Is by a secret load of grief opprest;
Forebear to add a note of timeless woe
Where discords ever are so prone to flow.

— Author Unknown

Spurgeon said, "Love stands in the presence of a fault with a finger on her lips."

If you must share your burden with someone, go to your pastor, whom you may rest assured will give you wise counsel. We are anxious to see the day return when the pastor will again be sought out as the counselor of troubled souls. Now, in all too many cases, counseling is a minor part of the pastor's ministry. Yet the need today for this type of ministry is greater than ever.

DON'T SHOWER ALL YOUR AFFECTION ON YOUR CHILD

The new baby brings new joy, but sometimes because of a foolish, selfish mother, his coming introduces tension and unhappiness in the home. It is a great temptation for this new life to become the all-absorbing object of the mother's attention until the husband feels himself all but forgotten. Such fastening of a mother's love on her new baby may dim her love for her husband. Let the new mother be careful to bring her child into her love for her husband.

It was this deep, shared love between husband and wife that gave the little one life and brought him into the world. It is in this shared love that he will grow to emotional and spiritual maturity. If the wife breaks this precious fellowship and sets the child up as the complete object of her love and attention (even though done unintentionally), an unnatural situation develops which is full of serious consequences for husband, wife, and child.

The emotional and spiritual satisfaction of each member of the family depends on their shared love. In the case of the mother doting upon the child, the father is denied the wife's love, and the child is denied some of his father's love; it makes an emotional widow out of the mother for she has cut herself free from her husband's love and affection. The child grows into adulthood an emotional misfit, with a deep sense of insecurity.

“In connection with Charles M. Alexander’s marriage to Miss Cadbury, he gave her a ring inscribed with words: ‘Each for the other and both for God.’” That was your feeling at marriage. But when the new life comes, the language should be more inclusive. “Each for the other and the three for God.” Your child will come into your solemn marriage covenant. You will place your little one in the very heart of your love for God and for each other. There he and all will grow strong, confident, happy.

TRAITS THAT MAKE FOR MARITAL HAPPINESS OR UNHAPPINESS

Dr. Roy Burkhart in *From Friendship to Marriage*, had collected data on the causes of happy marriages and the causes of unhappy ones. This study he calls a “yardstick.” In the study, one thousand families were questioned as to what qualities made their marriage a success, or if it were a failure, what they believed made it so. Let us look at Dr. Burkhart’s important list.

“Qualities of My Wife That Make for Marital Happiness” (listed in the order of importance).

1. She is always clean and neat.
2. She dresses especially for me each evening before my arrival home.
3. She cooks well, plans good meals.
4. She is economical.
5. She knows when to talk.
6. She makes me want to please her.
7. She is a wonderful companion.
8. She is my complete mate.
9. She is free with her expressions of affection.
10. She is religious but not prudish.

These are revealing, and they are only a few of the statements. They show the many things that enter into family life in the everyday give and take. How about looking at the husband’s side?

1. He does little thoughtful things that I do not have a right to expect.
2. He is well groomed.
3. He tells me interesting things about his work.
4. He is sympathetic about my physical disturbances. He understands.
5. He senses when I want affection and when I don’t.
6. He always cleans the tub or basin after washing.
7. He kisses me before he leaves.
8. He notices little changes I make in the home.
9. He is identified with the church and other worthwhile organizations.
10. He never discusses my weak points in public.
11. He is tender and thoughtful in our love relations.
12. He can do handy things about the house.
13. He is not bored to stay home in the evening.
14. He never reminds me of his mother’s cooking.

Here we have the woman's evaluation of those qualities she believes help to make a happy home. Can we not definitely say that these should be—but often are not—qualities of the Christian? We see the qualities that should characterize every born-again person: thoughtfulness, tenderness, cooperation, love, humility, consideration.

How would you like to see the admissions of failure listed by the five hundred unhappy men and women as they put down those things which in their estimation, have spoiled their married life?

1. She is always finding fault.
2. She opposes me in all I try to do.
3. She is always clinging to her mother.
4. She is always fighting with the children.
5. She gets home often after I do and so I must wait for supper.
6. The home is always in an uproar.
7. She is always telling me I don't love her anymore.
8. She uses extreme makeup and nail polish.
9. She gets on my nerves.

This is only a partial list, little things that grew big enough to spoil happiness. We add the other side for balance:

1. He leaves a ring in the tub.
2. He refuses to do anything about the house.
3. He is grouchy with the children.
4. He is stingy with his family but liberal with others.
5. He is selfish.
6. He can't take criticism.
7. He insists on going to his mother's every Sunday evening.
8. He takes pride in scoffing at religion.
9. He shifts all the blame on me for our failures.
10. He is always alone with his thoughts.

Here we find the terrible power of the negative in life. Each is the opposite of Christian grace.

Taking these lists as a whole, they reveal character traits, selfishness or unselfishness, patience or impatience, fairness or unfairness, love or lack of love, and so on down through the list, which to those who penned them into the questionnaire were either testimonies of joy or admissions of despair. Each single sentence is a revelation of the human behavior pattern. May God help us to change our lives to conform to the profession we make.

HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

Marriage is a rich and satisfying experience to those who are willing to sacrifice selfish ideas and patterns of action and work together to please Christ and each other.

In the adjusting of two lives into a relationship of creative harmony, there are many trials, tears, heartaches, and conflicts. Christian marriage is full of happiness, but it is a happiness given by the Lord Jesus Christ to those who are willing to pay the price and deny themselves. Elsie Robinson, the journalist, has said something quite significant on this very point. We do not agree with her statement of marriage as a sacrament. Marriage is not a sacrament though it is holy, ordained of God, and is a relationship upon which the blessing of almighty God rests in tenderest affection. We feel there is real, down-to-earth common sense in her remarks and such common sense as would revolutionize the thinking of many of our young people if it were carefully attended to. She says:

It's my opinion that soft and pretty talk is what really fills the divorce courts. Little boys and girls read it and think they're going to make a go of marriage with candy hearts.

There is probably no institution on earth about which more sacrilegious tripe is written. This notion, that matrimony consists of legalized romance, is the silliest and most dangerous fallacy ever foisted on the human race.

I'm talking about real human beings who have the courage and audacity to live marriage as it is and was meant to be, the people who dare to be partners for life. Who dare to put aside their petty personal pattern, their pouts and peeves and quaking fears, and, kneeling, take the greatest Sacrament that God ever offered His children.

What are your chances of a happy marriage? Practically nil. Unless you're willing to work at it as the greatest job of your life and not one you'll desert whenever you get your hair ruffled.

Happiness and pleasure are pretty words. But they are the most poisonous things any human can experience as a steady diet. They'll make bums out of the bravest and finest people, either in or out of marriage. The Creator never meant people to be permanently happy here. People were invented for action and for service. And action and service always mean trouble.

Am I belittling marriage? I am not. I am reverencing it. But I am trying to lift it out of the Valentine muck into which it has fallen and show it for what it is.

Do I advise you to marry? I do, provided you're ready to face the works. If you want a kiddie game, buy yourself a flock of toy blocks. But if you can face marriage as men and women; if you can concentrate all you have of vision and courage, tender-ness and loyalty and burning faith, then and only then have you the right to put your hand in God's and say, "I, too, will work with You."

If you can't do that, you'd better not start monkeying around, or you'll be sorry. So think long, think hard, little Juliet and ardent Romeo, before you tackle something that was designed exclusively for those who will hold the line of marriage until the General says, "Rest now, thou good and faithful servant. Thou hast fought a good fight. . . thou hast finished the course . . . thou hast kept the faith . . . enter unto the peace of thy God everlasting."

RULES FOR A HAPPY MARRIAGE

An unknown author has set forth twelve rules for a happy marriage. These rules may be profitably studied by every couple.

1. Don't ever both get angry at the same time.
2. Never talk at one another, either alone or in company.
3. Never speak loudly to one another, unless the house is on fire.
4. Never find fault unless it is perfectly certain that a fault has been committed, and always speak lovingly.
5. Never taunt with a mistake.

6. Never make a remark at the expense of each other.
7. Never part for a day without loving words to think of during absence.
8. Never meet without loving welcome.
9. Never let the sun go down upon anger or grievance.
10. Never let any fault that you have committed go by, until you have frankly confessed it and asked forgiveness.
11. Never forget the happy hours of early love.
12. Never sigh over what might have been, but make the best of what is.

PERSONALITY QUALITIES

It is impossible to make a list of all the qualities that enter into our personalities as positive factors for a happy and successful marriage. It is worthwhile, however, to consider some of the outstanding personality qualities which have so much to do with happy, creative living together and qualities which the Holy Spirit longs to bring into full manifestation in every Christian life (Ephesians 2:10). Each of these qualities may serve as a goal for personality development and also for the training of the children (see Colossians 3:8-10; 12-14; Galatians 5:16-25).

POSITIVE QUALITIES

1. Prayerful, looking to Christ, dependent on Him
2. Cheerful, joyous, optimistic
3. Friendly, agreeable, cooperative
4. Tolerant, generous, possessing a sense of humor
5. Kind, courteous, tactful
6. Teachable, seeking to learn
7. Loyal
8. Having convictions deeply rooted
9. Having high ideals, exalted goals
10. Self-denying
11. Meek
12. Reserved, careful, thoughtful
13. Courageous, firm
14. Honest, sincere, straightforward
15. Patient, calm, steady
16. Happy, hopeful
17. Moderate, balanced
18. Judicious, fair, discerning
19. Loving God above all and seeking to please Him in every action
20. Sharing, seeking to share Christ's wonderful salvation with others
21. Growing into Christ's likeness and image

NEGATIVE QUALITIES

1. Prayerless, looking to self, dependent on self, independent of God
2. Gloomy, morose, pessimistic, bitter
3. Repellant, unsociable, disagreeable
4. Opinionated, Intolerant, Unkind
5. Rude, untactful, harsh
6. Stubborn, set, unteachable
7. Unfaithful
8. Vacillating, having many ideas but none deeply rooted so as to grip the will, attitudes, and heart
9. Having low standards, no goals that challenge
10. Egotistical, vain
11. Domineering
12. Aggressive, careless, thoughtless
13. Timid, fearful, weak
14. Deceitful, evasive, misleading
15. Explosive, excitable
16. Moody, depressed, hopeless
17. Being an extremist, immoderate
18. Prejudiced, dominated by emotional likes and dislikes, driven by unexamined theories
19. Living for self and seeking to please self, not concerned with the glory of God
20. Selfishly embracing Christ, not concerned that others should know Him as Lord and Saviour
21. Revealing uncertain spiritual growth, up today, down tomorrow

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| 22. Generous, open-hearted, forgiving | 22. Resentful, unforgiving, grudge-holding |
| 23. Neat, orderly, systematic | 23. Disorderly, no system, no concern for neatness |
| 24. Having a smiling face | 24. Having a frowning face |
| 25. Pleasant, pleasing voice | 25. Possessing a harsh, coarse voice |
| 26. Possessing a spiritual experience characterized by peace, love, joy, faith | 26. Having a spiritual experience characterized by conflict, morbidity, fear, selfishness, hate |
| 27. Genuinely interested in God's Word | 27. Having no concern for the Word of God, an attitude of indifference |
| 28. Having a radiant, happy, forward look, full of hope and expectancy | 28. Having a worried, morbid, backward look full of despair, disappointment |

FOR TIMES OF SORROW

Times of sorrow, depression, and melancholy come to all men. **“In the world ye shall have tribulation.”** There will be times when the problems of home life will seem to overwhelm. There may be misunderstandings, illness, death, financial reverses, temperamental and personality differences difficult to adjust and spiritual problems difficult to solve. What may be done to relieve the mind and ease the heart?

The story is told of an Oriental king who had spells of deep depression and melancholia. One day, determined to be cured of these “spells,” he called all the wise men of his kingdom together and demanded, “Tell me of a cure for sorrow and for depression of spirit.” The wise men begged for time that they might consider the problem together. After a number of days’ conference together they came back to the king and when asked for their answer said, “In times of sorrow and depression of spirit think, ‘This too will pass.’”

This represents about the best counsel that can be given by the world. But the real answer is in Christ. He is the only answer that meets the need and truly satisfies. The answer of the Lord Jesus to this problem is not a saying or a philosophy or some moral platitude. Christ’s answer is a Person, the Person of the Holy Spirit.

John 14:16: “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.”

Dr. R. A. Torrey, in a passage of rare beauty and penetrating insight, testifies to the comforting power of the Holy Spirit in a time of sorrow and depression of spirit. Dr. Torrey had just laid the body of his little girl away to await the great resurrection morning. She had been ill but seemed to be recovering, and so her death came unexpectedly, bringing a shocking grief to her parents.

Dr. Torrey says:

We carried the little body to the cemetery. It was raining pitilessly and as the little body was lowered into the grave and the rain poured upon the box that contained the casket, my wife turned to me and said: “Archie, I am so glad that Elizabeth is not in that box!”

When we returned home, the health officers demanded, very wisely, that after being fumigated we should leave the house to them and go to a strange hotel for the night. All that night there was the most prolonged thunderstorm, except one, that I ever passed through. It seemed to be one unceasing flash of lightning and crash of thunder, and we could not sleep.

The next morning as I went, thoroughly worn out, to the Bible Institute to meet my classes, as I passed around the corner of Chestnut Street and La Salle Avenue, I could contain my grief no longer. There was no one on the street, and I cried aloud, "Oh, Elizabeth! Elizabeth!" And just then this fountain [the Holy Spirit] that I had in my heart broke forth with such power as I think I had never experienced before, and it was the most joyful moment that I had ever known in my life.

Oh, how wonderful is the joy of the Holy Ghost! It is as unspeakably glorious thing to have your joy, not in things about you, not even in your most dearly loved friends, but to have within you a fountain ever springing up, springing up, springing up, always springing up, three hundred and sixty-five days in every year, springing up under all circumstances into everlasting life.

In times of sorrow, then, the blessed Holy Ghost will be your fountain of joy; He will break up the great deeps of sorrow and melancholy and will cause the waters of joy to flow and to overflow, till, in joy unspeakable and full of glory, you wonder at the love, mercy and grace of God! His promise will not fail; His promise is true! **"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly [heart] shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive"** (John 7:37-39).

Let us then look to our Saviour, trusting Him implicitly to solve our problems and to the Holy Spirit to comfort and give of His joy. It is the sweet ministry of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ (John 16:13-14). As He glorifies Christ and makes Him real to our hearts, we shall know the peace of God midst times of deepest sorrow; and as He takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us, our hearts leap within us for the joy of a vigorous faith that makes us **"more than conquerors."**

MARRIAGE HAS THREE BASIC STAGES

There seem to be three stages of development through which married life must go.

The first phase of married life is characterized by the fact that each one of the two partners recognizes in the other his ideal who harmonizes with his life needs. Everyone is familiar with this stage when in the first days of courtship and marriage each partner thinks the other is a walking personification of perfection. This attitude reveals the unity of heart.

In the second stage the husband and wife become aware of the need of a second kind of unity, unity of temperament, attitude, idea, and personality. This may be called for short, life-unity. This unity must be achieved as husband and wife work together in the common everyday tasks and problems of their married life. It is at this stage that young married couples begin to recognize the great difference between "heart-unity" and "life-unity." They begin to see the differences between themselves in attitude, temperament, practical ideas, and personality patterns. It is then that they begin to tell us that their marriage partner "seems" no longer the same. They are then tempted to bury their beautiful dreams about each other and they explain away their once beautiful unity of heart by saying it was only an idle, childish dream.

It is tragedy when this happens, for then there is destroyed the one practical basis of inspiration for them, in their love for each other, while the difficult days of working out a unity of life to life are passing on. Let married couples in this stage frequently affirm before God the indivisible unity of their hearts to each other in love.

Then a third phase approaches in which the two partners begin to realize a deep unity of life. If they have yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit in their living together, they will find that He has, through the conflicts and differences of their temperaments, attitudes, and personalities, brought about a transformation in both lives. Their respective attitudes and personalities will have been so transformed that the two fives will become one. Each will, under His direction, yield up its selfishness and dross, and each will receive of the good of the other. Through this process of give and take, each will grow into the beautiful harmony of two lives in one. This is not a bit of wishful thinking, but it is something that happens in most Christian marriages, as any faithful pastor can testify.

Those who refuse to yield themselves up to the transformations of this growth of two lives into one will of course find themselves growing farther and farther apart. If pastors would clearly point out the difference between heart-unity and life-unity and the process which leads to it, we believe much needless fear and sorrow would be spared young married couples. Many for lack of understanding never reach the third stage, or if they do reach it, do so after the loss of much precious time.

A DANGER TO BE AVOIDED

No person is free from faults. It should not surprise us to find faults in our loved one. The important thing is not whether or not we find the faults, but what we do with them when we discover them. It is possible for a husband to dwell so much on his wife's few faults that he becomes utterly blind to her many good qualities. It is possible to take two pennies and put one over each eye so as to shut out from view the beautiful landscape, the blooming flower, or the majestic mountain.

For two cents one can lose sight of a million dollar's worth of value.

We know of a woman whose husband did not hang up his clothing as he should. This trait is aggravating to a wife who is neat and tidy, and she nagged him constantly in regard to it until she lost sight of the fact that her husband was a good provider, ambitious and getting ahead in his business, gentle and kindly in the home, deeply spiritual and an earnest worker in the Lord's service.

We knew a man who nagged so much about his wife's cooking that he became blind to the fact that she was a wonderful mother, an efficient housekeeper, a sweet personality, and a true and devoted mate.

It will help if we will remember our own faults when we are prone to think too much about the faults of our loved one. And then let us be as kind and generous to our loved one as we are to ourselves.

APPRECIATION

The heart of a beautiful marriage is appreciation, the smile with which husband and wife meet each other at the end of a busy day, when things have gone wrong; the loving kiss which they place on each other's lips; and the tender word of greeting can make the hardship of a disappointing day drop away. There are so many, many things that husband and wife may be genuinely thankful for in each other. One lovely Christian wife told her dearest friend that every day her husband thanks her and commends her for the things she does about the house. She said that even if she made mistakes, he would find something even about her mistakes for which to commend her. No wonder that home was a bit of heaven on earth.

One minister testifies that his father would go out early in the morning and find the most beautiful rosebud in the garden "and put it at Mother's place to greet her when she came to breakfast." When he stepped behind her chair and gave her his morning kiss the whole day was glorified. Even if the children had gotten out of bed on the wrong side and had come downstairs in a mood to quarrel, they felt ashamed because the life of their home had been touched by the beauty of a thoughtful and gracious love! This little family lived close to the line of genuine poverty, yet the home was radiant because of the love of the father.

You remember the story of the wretched, weary tramp slumping on the park bench, confused and unhappy. A lovely child came and touched him, and said, "God loves you, and I love you, too!" That message brought the tramp to his feet, a saved and redeemed man. Why? "**We love him because he first loved us**" (I John 4:19).

The great apostle John said, "**Beloved, let us love one another**" (I John 4:7).

Appreciation is love at work. And appreciation will never fail to inspire, encourage and bless, for "**charity [love] never faileth.**"

A TECHNIQUE FOR CONFLICT

Conflict may be either good or bad. It may be the medium of a rich growth of meaning and value, provided the correct spiritual attitudes are maintained by husband and wife. If husband and wife maintain the proper spiritual attitude, the Holy Spirit will make conflict a creative experience.

Creative conflict enlarges the mental horizons, enriches the resources of wisdom in the life, humbles and destroys arrogance, and opens the way for genuine growth of mind and soul. The idea that the issue is between harmful conflict and no conflict is wrong; conflict is sure to come, and if it is considered as bad, it will yield nothing but harm. If two strong personalities believe conflict is harmful, they may by vigorous efforts of the will repress all conflict and never take issue with each other. The results are always disastrous, for genuine differences are imbedded, and the two personalities grow farther and farther apart. Their world becomes an artificial world of make-believe, their personalities become stunted, and growth becomes an impossibility. The real issue is between bad conflict and good conflict.

POINTS FOR GOOD CONFLICT

1. Pray before you discuss; If you find yourself launched full tide in discussion of conflicting points of view before you have had time or thought for prayer, move to stop the discussion. Later when you have time, ask God to guide the conflict and to make it creative of real mental and spiritual values. Ask the Holy Spirit to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ in the thoughts that are exchanged. Nothing will do more toward insuring a proper spiritual tone in the conflict.
2. Express your ideas clearly and forcibly, but not in hostility or a nasty temper.
3. Introduce new ideas and helpful points of view that keep the discussion moving forward rather than in circles.
4. Encourage your loved one to present his or her ideas as clearly as possible, for the better able he is to present his case in its best light, the more likely you will be to learn something that will enrich your mental and spiritual experience. Be eager to learn something new from your loved one's remarks.
5. After you have each presented your ideas as clearly as you know how, let the discussion terminate there. Do not seek to win the argument. Seek rather to grow by it. Leave the result with Christ. Then affirm your love to each other and pray.

SOME DON'TS

1. Don't become discouraged over conflict. Your loved one still loves you. You will both be wiser and better for the exchange if you offer it up to the Lord Jesus Christ with a prayer that He bless it to your good and your growth.
2. Don't sulk or pout.
3. Don't become moody, bad-tempered, irritable, or have an anger tantrum. This reveals a selfish spirit and a closed mind.
4. Don't evade conflict unless you feel the proper conditions are not present to make it profitable. Face conflict squarely, frankly, fearlessly. Then conflict becomes a valuable means of growth in marriage.
5. If you become angry, keep quiet.
6. Don't scold, nag, or carry grudges in a sullen manner, nor compete with your loved one in irritability.

A LITTLE LONGER

Oh, to be in Jesus' bosom,
There to hide my pain and care,
There to feel His arms around me,
All my trouble ended there!

Oh, to be in quiet lying
On His peace-insuring breast,
There forgetting sin and sorrow,
There forevermore at rest!

Ties that hold us here, unknotted
In the faith we there must know—
Willing, in His trusted presence,
To let earthly dear things go:

Willing to resign the dearest,
Even the flesh of our flesh born,
Even the baby, in our dying
Left so humanly forlorn!

Ah! I feel his tiny fingers
Reaching helplessly to me;
Let me still a little longer
Painful, sorrowing, troubled be;

So I yet may be his comfort,
Shield him from the bitter cold,
Lead him by my guiding counsel
To a tender Saviour's fold!

Not until my task is ended,
Task of toil or agony,
Would I close my weary eyelids
And in bliss forever be:

Not until life's work is finished
Would I seek the perfect rest
That awaits the poor believer,
Sinking tired on Jesus' breast.

— Mary B. Dodge

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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