

How a Righteous Life Makes a Better Marriage, #2

Intro: Let's continue our study of how a righteous life makes a better marriage. Jesus in His famous Sermon on the Mount reveals the righteousness that His disciples would practice. When we apply those principles of righteousness to marriage we can formulate a set of principles that will keep our marriages happy and enduring.

In our first lesson we consider three principles of application

Do not let anger cause you to be abusive but instead make reconciliation a priority.

Keep your eyes for your spouse alone.

Really mean it when you say "till death do us part".

Now let continue to study Jesus' words and how they can help us in our relationship with our spouse.

Communicate with transparency and honesty.

"Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.' But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one. (Matthew 5:33-37)

Jesus wanted his disciples to be people of integrity in their speech. They didn't have to resort to oaths to be believed because they told the truth all the time! Think of the value of honesty in speech in marriage.

It would cause us to communicate honestly.

As marriage partners we need to set the conditions for honest communication. That means that we create a safe environment for being truthful.

In many marriages, answering a question honestly is marital suicide. (It reminds me of a recent commercial where a wife comes in and asks her husband if a certain outfit makes her look fat and he says, "yes". She storms out of the room mad!) Well, we learn that some questions just can't be answered honestly!

Seriously, we need to be able to reveal our true thoughts in marriage. When we say something, mean it!

It would cause us to keep our promises.

We need to build trust by doing what we say. We start marriage with many promises. We destroy marriage by not keeping them. Our vows are not idealistic words to be quickly discarded but solemn promises before God to "love, honor, and cherish" our mates.

*When we say we are going to do something then do it!
Think about how marriages would be changed, if there was true honesty
and transparency in the relationship. No person would bitterly say after the
breakup, "if only I'd known".*

Be more concerned about generosity than equality.

*"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. (Matthew 5:38-42)
Jesus is here concerned about the spirit of our relationships. Do we build them on grace or justice?*

Building a marriage on grace not justice is the grounds of a forgiving relationship! The eye for an eye mentality will destroy any relationship!

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (Colossians 3:12-13)

Building a marriage on grace is also the grounds of a generous giving relationship. If we build a marriage on justice, we are always concerned about equality; and of course it is important that we recognize the rights of both husband and wife in marriage. However, Jesus encouraged His disciples to be less concerned about equality and more about liberality. Husbands and wives need the mentality to say, "I will give more. I will go further."

Think of what a difference this would make! Think about how much better marriages would be if each partner had the unselfishness to say these things. And what person would want to put away a person who was so giving, so generous toward them!

Keep showing love when the other person is least deserving of it!

*"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-48)
Jesus in this paragraph extends the principle of grace he had previously expounded. And there may be times when our spouse almost becomes an*

“enemy”. What do you do when someone else is at their worst? Do you become like them? Or, do you keep doing what is right?

As husbands and wives we need to recognize that everybody has a bad day (work-related or family-related stress, waves of sadness from a past hurtful experience, biological changes and physical fatigue).

They things and more can cause both husbands and wives to be grumpy, moody, unresponsive and even inconsiderate.

If we can “love our enemies” who do far worse, then surely we can love the person we have committed to live with for life!

Jesus reminded His disciples of the nature of God’s love. Does God love people on the basis of how deserving they are? Or does He loved them because of who He is! It is the latter. Jesus encouraged His disciples to love others unconditionally. That’s why they could do good to their enemies and pray for them who abused them.

But someone says, “I don’t think I should be a doormat. My husband/wife doesn’t deserve such sacrifices”. Yes, you may be right; but God does! It is God’s unconditional love for us that empowers us to love other unconditionally.

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Ephesians 5:1-2)

Conclusion: Add these three principles of righteous living to your relationships and watch them transform. Your marriage can become better when you become better!

I urge you to remember today God’s unselfish love for all of us! He gave His Son to die for us!