

How To Attain a Godly Marriage - Part 1

Developing Your Relationship With God, Your Spouse and Others

In this series of articles we're going to look at the marriage relationship - specifically, how to attain a godly marriage. Now, I didn't say "How to obtain a PERFECT marriage!" But let's see how close we can get to the ideal marriage that God intended for a man and a woman.

I'm going to discuss this relationship from the viewpoint of the R.A.D.I.C.A.L. biblical principles:

- Relationships (first with God and then with others)
- Attitudes
- Disciplines
- Inspired Living
- Clean Heart
- Abundant Fruit
- Love

Relationship With God

Let's first look at our personal relationship with God and then discuss it in context of the marriage relationship.

Only our relationship with God fills that empty void inside each of us! And no matter how hard we try to change our spouse so he/she can fill that void, it won't work!

Our individual, personal, intimate relationship with God must be our number one priority. The unconditional love we seek on a regular basis can come only from God. When He reveals His love to us, it satisfies us and gives us the ability to love others in the same manner.

God's love for us is hard to fully comprehend. It has so many different facets and depths to it that once we think we've figured it out, God shows us His love in a different, deeper level. Then we are amazed that God loves us with such great a love when we are so rotten at times!

It's because of this unconditional love that we know we can always draw near to God and His love will be revealed to our heart. When relationships fail us, even if just for a moment, we can always turn our heart toward God to receive what we need at that moment.

So how can we act (and react) in a godly manner when our spouse doesn't demonstrate love to us in a manner we want him/her to? First, realize that our spouse isn't perfect and can't read our mind on what we want him/her to do in particular situations (sometimes we have to tell them!)

Second, instead of looking at what we didn't get in the situation, turn the situation around and show love to your spouse - immediately! Don't harbor a grudge. Don't 'stuff' your feelings of rejection - forgive and move on with your life.

Third, turn to God to receive His love. Focus on God and give Him praise at that moment for what you DO have - instead of complaining about how your spouse treated you. Every time you catch yourself rehashing the hurt your spouse inflicted upon you, change your focus to worshipping God. Only by being in God's presence will we be able to keep a proper focus on the truth about our situation - neither my spouse nor I are perfect and we can forgive and move on.

You've heard the phrase 'don't sweat the little things' - well, if you don't take care of the little things, they develop into gigantic problems down the road. If you react in a godly manner - by showing love - you will immediately be at peace and see God at work in you.

Showing Love to Your Spouse

Are you trying to learn 'techniques' on how to communicate in your marriage - or are you asking God to reveal His love toward you so you can then shower that love upon your mate? There's a world of difference between these two strategies.

When we're in love with someone, we don't have to be taught how to show our love toward that person. But when we get off track, sometimes we need help to show us in what areas we're off base. Just like the law is there to show us our sin, the good things God shows us are also there to reveal how we've gotten off track.

So, what does love look like? Love shows up through our attitudes and behavior and motivates everything we do. Therefore, in order to understand how to develop healthy relationships, we need to know how love manifests itself. Let me give you some ideas taken from the Bible at 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. As you read this list remember that this is also how God loves you.

- Love endures long and is patient and kind
- Love never is envious nor boils over with jealousy
- It is not boastful or vainglorious
- Does not display itself haughtily
- It is not conceited (arrogant and inflated with pride)
- It is not rude (unmannerly) and does not act unbecomingly
- Love (God's love in us) does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking
- It is not touchy or fretful or resentful
- It takes no account of the evil done to it [it pays no attention to a suffered wrong]
- It does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail
- Love bears up under anything and everything that comes
- It is always ready to believe the best of every person
- Its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances
- It endures everything [without weakening]
- Love never fails [never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end]

Have you gotten off track in any of the above areas? I'm not asking whether you have perfected each area, but whether the Holy Spirit is showing you areas that need working on.

We can each take any one of those items and spend quite a bit of time conforming to it. And that's exactly what we need to do. However, let's not get overwhelmed with the task before us. We're not alone in our efforts. God is inside us and will give us insights on what needs changed first in our lives and how to do it. He also gives us the motivation and His power to accomplish the changes.

You know, we want people to treat us this way, but how often are we willing to treat others the same way? Are you willing to treat others the way you want them to treat you? That's a tough question to be honest about. Because the truth is, even if we treat others with the type of love described above, they won't treat us the same way. So we think, 'Why should I bend over backwards to treat them right when they're not going to treat me right?'

Let me answer that by asking you this: How does God love you? Does He love you only when you love Him in the right manner? No! He loves you every day, twenty-four hours a day, no matter how you treat Him back. Now that's radical love toward us that we don't deserve. Thankfully, God doesn't give us what we do deserve!

I'll continue this article in Part 2, looking further at our relationship as well as our attitudes and disciplines that will help us attain a godly marriage.

Application

How can you deepen your relationship with God today?

How can you share God's unconditional love toward your spouse?

What "little things" do you need to forgive your spouse for and move on with your life?