

How To Attain a Godly Marriage - Part 2

Attitudes and Disciplines

How did you do this last week on loving your spouse? Were you able to quickly forgive and move on – or did you end up rehashing the hurt done to you? Well, it does take time to change our habits and how we respond to others is also a habit. It seems we have programmed responses (habits) and it takes awareness on our part to begin to change that habit.

Let's look at some attitudes and disciplines that will help us have a better relationship with our spouse.

Attitudes

One of the major principles that helps us change our habit quickly is that of our attitude. Although our attitude is a choice, we often let it flow from what we believe. And if we don't have hope for receiving the love we desire, then choosing a positive attitude is difficult because it will rub against the inner belief of our heart and wear us out until we cave in and give up and resort to acting according to our heart's core belief.

Therefore, the easiest way to permanently change our attitude is to change our belief. And that comes from learning God's truths and letting the Holy Spirit penetrate our heart with those truths. By doing so, we realize that the kind of unconditional love we desperately seek can only come from God. Then we begin to receive God's love and we are satisfied. When we are satisfied, then we won't put unrealistic expectations upon our spouse to give us unconditional love (on the consistent basis that we want it) and we can then interact with our spouse in a different manner.

Our hope comes from our relationship with God – that God will fulfill our need for love. Our hope is not placed upon whether our spouse ever changes. This shift in where we place our hope allows us to change our attitude toward our spouse. We also see that we cannot provide the depth of love our spouse needs because only God fulfills that role. But we can love our spouse with God's love revealed to us and through us. When we do, we receive more of God's love, at a deeper level, along with God's peace that transforms us.

Our attitudes are also influenced by the people we hang around with. If we listen to others who constantly put down their spouse, we will be influenced to look at all the negative stuff in our spouse and focus on them. We must avoid these situations and, instead, read the Bible constantly to retain our new attitude.

Another attitude to change is that of being self-centered. Throughout the Bible God tells us to love and serve others first – to die to our own desires and to put the desires of others above our own. And this is absolutely necessary within a marriage.

Most marriages fail because one or both spouses are being self-centered. Even if the spouse is aware of this, he or she fears that if they put the needs of their spouse first, their own needs won't

be met. But those who look to God to receive their unconditional love are always filled with God's love and realize the truth that "to live is to give." Try it – you'll like it!

God tells us that if we die to our self-efforts and rely upon His power and guidance, then we will be able to take the actions necessary to live the abundant life He offers. Most of us don't want to die to ourselves, whether it be because of our pride or fears. If we don't die, this keeps our focus upon our own abilities to survive or change.

This attitude of survival keeps us operating in the flesh and wears down our emotional and physical faculties. It also robs us of the power and the blessings of God. Our attitudes remain pessimistic because we realize we don't have the strength in ourselves to make the changes we want or those that God is asking us to make.

The biggest influence to changing our attitudes and keeping them changed is learning more about Who God is and what His promises are to those of us who are His adopted children. Our attitudes are filled with motivation when we understand God's love toward us and how much He desires to fulfill our deepest needs of love and purpose. If we change our beliefs, it changes our thinking, we change our outlook on our marriage, which influences our attitudes.

Disciplines

To determine what disciplines to focus on, we need to know what our objectives are. We may think our primary objective is to change our spouse so our needs will be met. But this focus is only a by-product of what's going on in our lives. We must change from the inside out. Once our beliefs and thoughts are transformed, our attitudes and actions will be permanently changed. During this time of transformation, we must work simultaneously on our thoughts and our actions.

What makes a marriage a godly one is when both spouses live their lives according to God's guidelines. What are our individual objectives? As Christians we are to become like Christ in everything we do. It is a complete lifestyle change. It begins with gaining an understanding of who we are as new creatures in Christ. Without this understanding we stay stuck in looking at our marriage from the world's viewpoint, which has goals contrary to God's.

There are both spiritual disciplines and physical disciplines. In the spiritual area, these disciplines include

- Reading and studying the Bible
- Prayer
- Worship
- Evangelism
- Serving
- Stewardship of our time and money
- Fasting
- Time for silence and solitude
- Learning

- Perseverance in these disciplines

These are discussed in more detail in Donald S. Whitney's book *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, which I recommend you read.

Many pastors teach about spiritual disciplines, but not about physical disciplines of bringing our soul (mind, will and emotions) and our body (the fleshly desires and instincts) under the control of the Holy Spirit. These include areas such as:

- Align our "will" with God's
- Renew our mind
- Control our emotions
- Verbalize our future
- Control our fleshly desires

You can gain more insight on both the spiritual and physical disciplines by reading my book *Out of Recovery & Into Living Your Dreams!*. While you may not be dealing with addictions, the principles set forth in this book apply to all people struggling with relationships and finding purpose in life.