

## **How To Attain a Godly Marriage - Part 4**

### **Cleaning Out the Junk In Our Hearts**

So far in this series we've talked about our relationship with God, our spouse and others, our attitudes, disciplines, and finding our passion in life to use it in a project to love and serve others. If you've missed any of these issues, you can read them on our website.

Each of these topics could consume its own book to fully paint the entire picture of how that topic plays out in our lives. But I hope I'm giving you a glimpse of each topic to get you started on seeking further truth in each area.

Today we're going to look at how to make room in our heart for us to be able to live in a relationship with our spouse the way God wants us to. Many things clutter our heart and therefore don't allow God's Word to penetrate and take root. Let's take a look at a few of these things.

#### **Unbelief/Believing the Lies**

One main hindrance is our unbelief – not believing that God will do in our life what He has done in other lives. We know He *can*, but we doubt He *will* do it for us. We also are not aware of the lies we believe, thinking they're the truth.

What we believe affects our attitudes. Without hope, our attitudes stink! Hope for what? Hope for a better life, a better marriage, a purpose for our life. What do you need hope for? Write down areas where you feel hopeless. Now search the Bible for answers – God's answers that provide a way to change or a way to get through your situation. Even a simple thing like receiving a revelation of God's love toward you will bring to you the peace you need right now.

#### **Self-Centeredness**

Another item that occupies a large area of our heart is self-centeredness. When we are filled with only desires to satisfy our "wants," then we don't have room for doing God's will. His will involves loving and serving others. And we can't do that if we're focused only on getting our own desires met. Sometimes in order to take the focus off of ourselves we need to make a list of who we can focus on – beginning with our spouse. Make a list of specific things you can do (or say) to serve your spouse and demonstrate your love toward your spouse. Review this list every morning and add to it as necessary. You might even have to ask your spouse what you can do for them – but if you'll listen first I'm sure you'll hear little things he or she says that you can do.

#### **Forgiveness**

Remember, we're trying to get rid of the junk in our hearts so God will have room to work out His plans in our life. In addition to identifying false beliefs and replacing them with God's truths, and laying aside our self-centeredness, we also need to forgive our spouse. And then to forget the hurt done to us. Ouch!

It's so easy to rehash the hurt done to us by our spouse. As I read Patricia Raybon's book this week I was reminded by God of a hurt I was hanging on to, even though I had already forgiven my husband long ago when it happened. Sometimes we have to make a conscious effort to stop the rehashing of hurtful events. And as soon as we do, God floods us with His love and peace.

So, what hurts have you been hanging on to and rehashing? Do you need to forgive that person? (Note – we don't always have to verbally tell that person they hurt us, we can forgive them in our heart and move on!) Will you make a commitment that as soon as you catch yourself rehashing that hurt in your mind you will stop that thought process and turn to praising God for the good things in your life?

### **Get Rid of Labels**

Another area of our heart that needs to be cleared out is our "self-talk." Some of the labels we place on ourselves aren't true and we need to stop calling ourselves these things. Labels such as: I'm a failure, I'm stupid, I'm an addict (or alcoholic, codependent, adult child, etc.), I'll never amount to anything. All of these labels are opposite to what God says about us. Become aware of the labels you verbalize about yourself and stop using the labels!

We think that labels help us to identify the problem, but usually the labels are very broad and even "good" behavior can fall into the negative label. God never calls us what we are or what we were. Whenever He changed someone's name in the Bible, it was always a name that a person would grow into – it was a new name full of their specific potential. What God "spoke" became reality. What are you speaking about yourself and your future?

### **Take Care of the Small Things**

The last area we'll discuss is that of taking care of the little things in your heart before they become large problems. Look back at your big problems and you'll notice they all started out as little things we thought wouldn't bother us or grow into big problems. Well, we were wrong! So we need to recognize what little things are in our heart that have not been dealt with and deal with them as soon as possible!

### **Fill Up Your Heart**

Now that you've gotten rid of some of the things that cluttered up your heart and sapped you of emotional and spiritual strength, what do you do with all that room in your heart? You fill it up with God's love and His Word. You deepen your relationship with God first by spending time reading and meditating upon His Word, and praying to Him, etc., etc. (remember the disciplines discussed in a previous article?). Then you take your list of things that you can do for your spouse and you work on doing those things and turning them into habits. Then after you've got those habits down pat, you do the same for your children and then your friends.