



# Marriage Series, Lesson 4

*The Care and Feeding of Your Marriage, Week 4 –September 27*

## **I. Looking Back: A brief review**

In last week's lesson we started off by talking about the differences in men and women. We discussed how men are more physically oriented while women are more verbally and emotionally oriented. We also discussed about how our relationships can be represented as a garden in which all of the things that we need to nurture each other in our marriage relationship is grown. Today, I'd like to continue on with this thought and get into some of the nitty-gritty of those things with which we should be concerned in our relationships. We will be touching on some of those things that no one EVER talks about, especially in church, but are of the utmost importance at this stage in our married lives.

## **II. Looking Forward: Getting back to a party of two**

Most if not all of us in this class have kids that are all grown or almost grown now. We are moving into a new phase of our lives where we are getting back to a household of two. Kids are a wonderful thing but they can serve as a buffer or divider between a man and wife that keeps them separated. Once that buffer is gone, the void left can sometimes feel awkward and uncomfortable if the relationship has deteriorated and the two have lost some if not most of that connection that brought them together in the beginning. We oftentimes need to reconnect and get to know each other again. When grandkids come along you might be tempted to throw all of your attention into the new little ones and that's a wonderful part of this new phase of life but resist the temptation to replace one buffer with another.

Some may be thinking, "that'll never happen!" but keep heart! This is an attainable goal. You've been here before. It's not really that unlike back when you were when you first dating. The difference is that we're a little older and, hopefully, a little wiser. The good news is that we (should) know what they like. The bad news is that have also had a lot of water under the bridge. Moving water has a tendency to erode. But, it can also wash away the bad and bring new life back.

The bad experiences and disappointments that have and will occur between us and our spouses can sometimes make us feel jaded and disillusioned with marriage. We must be careful to guard against this and work to repair any damage and disharmony that builds up in the relationship as the damage will only increase exponentially if allowed to fester as time goes on.

For example, do you hold grudges against your spouse? Do you "punish" them for past behaviors?

**Proverbs 19:22** – *22 Don't say, "I will get even for this wrong." Wait for the LORD to handle the matter.*

The writer of this verse may not have necessarily been thinking of a married couple when he penned this verse but it's just as applicable. By giving an offense to God to avenge, it allows you to let it go and move on to forgiveness. Pray for both you and your spouse that not only will the offending party see what they've done wrong and seek forgiveness but also that the offended party will accept their apology and grant forgiveness.

But, what if I don't want to forgive them or I just can't? You might want to respond that you've forgiven them time and time for the same thing over and over and you've reached the point where you just can't forgive any longer. Well, if they are truly repenting and trying to change then the book of Matthew has a response for this.

**Matthew 18:21-22** – <sup>21</sup> *Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?"* <sup>22</sup> *"No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!"*

**Matthew 6:14-15** – <sup>14</sup> *"If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you.* <sup>15</sup> *But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

But, you might say, you just don't understand my situation and just how hard this person can be to live with. Matthew also had a response to that.

**Matthew 7:3-5** – <sup>3</sup> *"And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own?"* <sup>4</sup> *How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye?"* <sup>5</sup> *Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.*

Now again, you might want to try and argue that Matthew wasn't talking about spouses here. Are you so certain? Should your spouse not also be a close if not your very best friend? Your spouse will undoubtedly have some very annoying things about them but don't we all? That's why we should all, including our spouses, work on ourselves continually to make ourselves better people.

Do you often do things or behave in a way towards your spouse that you would never tolerate them doing? Do you say things to your spouse whether in the way it's phrased or in a tone that you would never tolerate them saying to you? If you address your spouse in a way that you would never think of talking to other people, then you must stop and ask for their forgiveness.

**Proverbs 19:23** – <sup>23</sup> *The LORD detests double standards; he is not pleased by dishonest scales.*

**Matthew 7:12** – <sup>12</sup> *"Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets."*

Are you faithful in all things to your spouse? I am talking about not just physically but emotionally as well.

**Proverbs 5:15-21** – <sup>15</sup> *Drink water from your own well — share your love only with your wife.* <sup>16</sup> *Why spill the water of your springs in the streets, having sex with just anyone?* <sup>17</sup> *You should reserve it for yourselves. Never share it with strangers.* <sup>18</sup> *Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth.* <sup>19</sup> *She is a loving deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts satisfy you always. May you always be captivated by her love.* <sup>20</sup> *Why be captivated, my son, by an immoral woman, or fondle the breasts of a promiscuous woman?* <sup>21</sup> *For the LORD sees clearly what a man does, examining every path he takes.*

**1 Corinthians 7:2-5** – <sup>2</sup> *But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.* <sup>3</sup> *The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs.* <sup>4</sup> *The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife.* <sup>5</sup> *Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

As you will remember that we discussed last week, men are very physical creatures. They not only crave and desire physical touch but actually need it just as the woman needs the emotional touch that men so often neglect. It feeds the same core needs that we both have that go beyond the physical and emotional plane, they're just administered in slightly different ways. When those needs are not met then we become vulnerable to outside temptations that can and will harm our relationships.

Please humor me as I speak to each group specifically:

- Ladies, your men do desire you but please don't make the mistake of thinking it's merely carnal. This physical connection is one important way in how your husband expresses his love for you. Denying him that stifles a very important way in which he bonds with you.
- Men, your ladies do enjoy the physical aspect of your relationship but remember that they are much more complex than you are and their needs are the same. It's been said that, "Men are microwaves and women are crock pots." Although humorous there is a grain of truth there. Be sure that you give your lady the emotional fulfillment that she needs. Remember those things you did before you were married like bringing her flowers, opening the door for her, writing her love notes, late night talks with her, asking her out on dates, and maybe most importantly doing little jobs around the house BEFORE she asks? I guarantee that she remembers! Why did you stop doing these things? We men should never stop courting our wives!

**1 Thessalonians 5:11** – <sup>11</sup> *So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.*

Do you encourage your spouse? Do you tell them that you appreciate them and the things they do? Everyone loves encouragement. In our society we compliment and encourage complete strangers and even more so our close friends. So, isn't it doubly important to tell your spouse who should be your closest friend just how much you appreciate what they do for you? The side benefit of doing this is that it makes you reflect on the good that they do that you might be taking for granted or might not have even really noticed before.

### **III. Questions For Discussion**

1. Does the passion that existed at the beginning of a marriage have a place in a "mature" marriage?
2. What are some ways to go about forgiving your spouse for offenses they may have committed against you?
3. Ask yourself if you have any offenses against your spouse for which you have not sought forgiveness and/or tried to make right? If so, how can you go about correcting the situation?
4. What are some ways that you can encourage your spouse?

5. What are the dangers in comparing your spouse to someone else's spouse?
6. Why is important that you guard against discussing problems in your marriage with someone of the opposite sex?