

IS LOVE ENOUGH?

Feeling wonderful about one another does not make two people compatible over the long haul. Many couples assume that the excitement of their courtship will continue for the rest of their lives. That virtually never occurs! It is naive to expect two unique individuals to mesh together like a couple of machines and to remain exhilarated throughout life. Even gears have multiple cogs with rough edges to be honed before they will work in concert.

That honing process usually occurs in the first year or two of marriage. The foundation for all that is to follow is laid in those critical months. What often occurs at this time is a dramatic struggle for power in the relationship. Who will lead? Who will follow? Who will determine how the money is spent? Who will get his or her way in times of disagreement? Everything is up for grabs in the beginning, and the way these early decisions are made will set the stage for the future. The apostle Paul gave us the divine perspective on human relationships--not only in marriage, but in every dimension of life. He wrote, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3).

That one verse contains more wisdom than most marriage manuals combined.

ACCEPTING WHAT IS

Create the best marriage possible from the raw materials brought by two imperfect human beings with two distinctly unique personalities. But for all the rough edges that can never be smoothed and the faults that can never be eradicated, try to develop the best possible perspective and determine in your mind to accept reality exactly as it is. The first principle of mental health is to accept that which cannot be changed. You could easily go to pieces over adverse circumstances that are beyond your control. You can determine to hang tough, or you can yield to cowardice.

Can you accept the fact that your husband will never be able to meet all your needs and aspirations? Seldom does one human being satisfy every longing and hope in another. Obviously, this coin has two sides: You can't be his perfect woman either. He is no more equipped to resolve your entire package of emotional needs than you are to become his sexual dream machine every twenty-four hours. Both partners have to settle for human foibles and faults and irritability and fatigue and occasional nighttime "headaches." A good marriage is not one in which perfection reigns; it is a relationship in which a healthy perspective overlooks a multitude of unresolvables.

KNOWING GOD'S MIND

By reading these Holy Scriptures, we are given a window into the mind of the Father. What an incredible resource! The Creator, who began with nothingness and made beautiful mountains and streams and clouds and cuddly little babies, has elected to give us the inside story of the family. Marriage and parenthood were His ideas, and He tells us in His Word how to live together in peace and harmony. Everything from handling money to sexual attitudes is discussed in Scripture, with each prescription bearing the personal endorsement of the King of the universe. Why would anyone disregard this ultimate resource?

The Christian way of life lends stability to marriage because its principles and values naturally produce harmony. When put into action, Christian teaching emphasizes giving to others, self-discipline, obedience to divine commandments, conformity to the laws of man, and love and fidelity between husband and wife. It is a shield against behaviors that could be damaging to the relationship. Is it any wonder that a Christ-centered relationship is the best ground floor for a marriage?

You probably knelt together and sent a prayer to the Lord during your wedding ceremony. Return to that source daily for strength and stability in your marriage.

PRAYER

A meaningful prayer life is essential in maintaining a Christ-centered home. In fact, this communication between man, woman, and God has been the stabilizing factor throughout our forty-plus years of married life. In good times, in hard times, in moments of anxiety, and in periods of praise, we have shared this wonderful privilege of talking directly to our heavenly Father. What a concept. No appointment is needed to enter into His presence. We don't have to go through His subordinates or bribe His secretaries. He is simply there, whenever we bow before Him. Some of the highlights of my life have occurred in these quiet sessions with the Lord.

It is impossible for me to overstate the need for prayer in the fabric of family life. Not simply as a shield against danger, of course. A personal relationship with Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of marriage, giving meaning and purpose to every dimension of living. Being able to bow in prayer as the day begins or ends gives expression to frustrations and concerns, which might not otherwise be ventilated. On the other end of that prayer line is a loving heavenly Father who has promised to hear and answer our petitions. In this day, when families are disintegrating on every side, we dare not try to make it on our own. Couples who have not found a common faith are often left in a vulnerable position.