



# *INSTRUCTIONS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS*

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Entry 8 - 3

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## Marriage that Works

Marriage is God-created but that does not mean that it always works. Although a good marriage is greatly desired, obtaining one is not so easy. Societal pressures are continually tearing away at the fabric of marriage and many couples are ill-prepared to handle the challenges before them. So many marriages fall apart, and even those who stay together may just be two people living under the same roof. If couples understand the battle before them, and obey the counsel of scripture, they will have a great marriage. God made us and He invented marriage, so He knows how it should work. When it works, it is fantastic; it is everything we dreamed it should be and more. While every couple is different, the basic fundamentals of marriage are straight forward. In this study we will focus on four themes to help strengthen our marriages. They are; 1. The Power of Unity, 2. Proper Communication, 3. Baggage We Bring into Marriage, and 4. Intimacy in Marriage.

### **The Power of Unity**

Marriage is described as a yoke; like the one that joins a pair of oxen together. That's why scripture says that we should not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Marriage is a covenant, not a contract. God makes covenants, men make contracts. Contracts are short term arrangements that have a start and a finish; they are designed to end. Covenants, however, are meant to be eternal. A good marriage is a covenant, a funeral and a resurrection. At a wedding, two people die to their independence and are raised as a couple.

As the two are made one, their focus becomes us and not I. The Bible says that those who are joined together become one flesh. Before God, each of us must fulfill a personal destiny, but married couples must also fulfill a marriage destiny. A couple must find common goals. This requires a lot of flexibility. Some personal goals must die so that the common goals may live. Then a couple is on the road to unity. When they reach this level of unity, they will experience a new strength that is greater than what they had when they were single. The Bible says that

two are better than one, for one can put a thousand to flight but two can put ten thousand to flight. Strength and power are multiplied when two become one.

What a challenge! While denying our individuality we learn to embrace patience. A couple soon recognizes that there are seasons in life. There is a time to get married, a time to get established, a time to serve, a time to raise a family, a time to build, a time to work hard and a time to enjoy life. If a couple understands the seasons, they can work together and be crazy-in-love through it all. If they do not understand the season they are in, there will be great frustration and infighting will likely rise in the relationship.

After our allegiance to God, loving our partner is our greatest priority. When we argue, we must humble ourselves and be quick to repent and forgive. The most successful marriages are the ones where the couple repents and forgives quickly. It does not matter who is right and who is wrong, God will sort that out. Love is what matters and love endures all things, hopes all things and believes all things. It refuses to be proud, impatient or bossy; love never fails.

## Proper Communication

Before marriage, many couples think they have so much in common, but after marriage they find that they have little in common and are opposites. God made some of us to be relaters and others to be achievers. Both are godly callings, we are just wired differently. Learning to communicate with someone who is so different is essential if we are going to have a good marriage. Here are five types of communication. They start with abusive communication that should never be seen in marriage. The list ends with great communication.

### A. Slander (Negative)

This is destructive communication. It includes; cursing, name calling, demeaning words, harsh language, legalistic criticism, yelling, gossip, constant correction and nagging. These daggers can cut deep. They can completely crush a person and produce scars that last a lifetime.

### B. Silence (Negative)

Cold-war silence is also a form of abuse. There are two kinds of anger; 1. explosive, volcanic anger and 2. frozen anger. Both are bad. Silent, frozen anger causes bitterness to fester. It is a nasty weapon. Repent and forgive quickly and tell each other that you love one another. Do this even if you are unable to agree on the matter at hand.

### C. Survival or Superficial (Poor)

This is communication that only

goes an inch deep. We speak only to deal with the necessary business of running the house. Acquaintances, like the grocery clerk deserve that level of communication but it is not the right communication for a marriage. It leads to discouragement and depression.

### D. Sharing Life (Good)

This level of communication welcomes differing opinions and a limited amount of correction. It involves talking about the activities of the day and delights to make plans about the future. It is well-mannered, friendly, considerate and loving. It maintains a common bank account, shared responsibilities and a good amount of talking that includes many of the details of life.

### E. Soul Sharing (Best)

Soul sharing is the best communication in marriage. A couple works at listening and sharing their innermost secrets and thoughts with each other. They ask their partner about their dreams, wishes and aspirations. They also learn vulnerability by sharing their deepest pains and struggles. They are especially sensitive to listen to their partner's struggles and pains. This unites a couple romantically and draws them together as best friends.

### Baggage we Bring into Marriage

Everyone has a measure of spiritual, and relational baggage. Some try to hide it, but it usually surfaces when the pressures of life squeeze in. Negative baggage comes from many sources, including our own immaturity or from generational curses, addictions, abuse,

traumas, childhood neglect, scars from the sins we have committed, or from inappropriate child-rearing. These and other traumas can leave us with phobias and character flaws that bring unexpected strife to a marriage. Godly counsel can help bring understanding. Then prayer, breaking of curses, deliverance and changing of old habits can help a couple deal with their baggage.

### Intimacy in Marriage

It is important to keep intimacy in marriage. Besides sexual romance, intimacy involves gentle talking, touching, serving one another, an intimate look, sharing our feelings, laughing together, watching a sunset, snuggling during a movie, holding hands, going for a walk, asking for the other's opinion, doing chores together, expressing care and concern, eating a meal together with no one else around, buying surprise gifts, calling each other with tender love names and praying together while snuggling. Intimacy is not always successful because of busyness or difficult seasons but couples must understand the need to develop and sustain intimacy in their marriage. If they work at it, passions of romance and feelings of tender love can be enjoyed for a lifetime.

You cannot change your partner but you can change yourself. Humble yourself and ask the Lord for help. He will teach you how to love. When a marriage works, most other things in life work as well. AΩ



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