

Avoiding the Deadly Sins of Marriage
Why Can't I Have It My Way?
How to Break Out of Selfishness
Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / Oct. 12, 2003

THREE RADICAL CHANGES that'll help you break out of selfishness and start serving in your marriage

I. You've Got to Change WHY You Do What You Do in Your Marriage

Phil 2:3 "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit..."

Why do you do what you do in your marriage? What drives you? Is it your own happiness and your own pleasure? Is your standard attitude a "What's In It For Me" attitude? Are your goals and your desires the only ones that matter?

James 3:16-17 "For where envy and **self-seeking** exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

1 Cor. 13:4-8 "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, **does not seek its own**..."

2 Cor. 5:9 "Therefore we make it our goal, whether absent from the body or present, to be well pleasing to Him."

II. You've Got to Change What You're LOOKING FOR in Your Marriage

Phil 2:4 "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others..."

Your entire focus needs to change.

- Stop keeping a list of ways your spouse disappoints you
- Stop looking for new ways of how they've failed you that just add fuel to the fire and allow you to play the martyr for another day
- That's all about you – and it's all 'ME' FOCUSED
- Stop thinking about and keeping score of who's serving and sacrificing the most.

If you're gonna look for something...

- Start looking for ways to serve and bless your spouse!

Gary Thomas says, "The beauty of marriage is that it confronts our selfishness and demands our service twenty-four hours a day. When we're most tired, most worn down, and feeling more sorry for ourselves than we ever have before, we have the opportunity to confront feelings of self-pity by getting up and serving our mate." **Sacred Marriage**, Gary Thomas, p. 186

In a tape series on marriage, **Pastor C.J. Mahaney** challenges us men to recover that sense of sacrifice in our marriage towards our wives that Christ demonstrates towards us. He points out that sacrifice isn't sacrifice unless it costs us something, and then he leaves a challenging question hanging in the air: "Gentlemen, what are we doing each day for our wives that involves sacrifice? What are you doing each day for your wife that is costing you something"

Paul Tripp says "Without even recognizing it, we quickly fall into a "my desire, my will, and my way" lifestyle, where the things we say and do are driven by the cravings of our own hearts. If we were honest, we would have to confess that the central prayer of our hearts is "my kingdom come." Imagine what a marriage becomes when two mini-kings are required to share time and space. Underneath the vows, both persons are driven by their own cravings and expectations. What they really want is for the other to make them happy, and as long as he or she does so, they remain committed to the marriage... This is why Christ said that to be his disciples we must die to ourselves. No one can serve two masters. Ambassadors must die to their own kingship to properly represent the one true King." *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, Paul David Tripp, p. 105

John 3:30 "He must increase, but I must decrease."

You know what? If you feel like you're dying in your marriage... good! Less of you and more of Him is what's needed in your life... and in my life, because your marriage is part of the workbench that God lays you on to sand off those rough selfish edges.

Gal. 5:13,15 "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use your liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but **through love serve one another**... but if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!"

III. You'll Need to Change the Way You're THINKING in Your Marriage

Phil. 2:5 "Let this mind be in your which was also in Christ Jesus."

Are you always worried and trying to make sure that you don't get taken advantage of? That wasn't the mindset of Jesus. That's not what He was focused on.

-v. 7 "made Himself of no reputation" – He did it!

-v. 7 "taking the form of a servant" – He did it!

-v. 8 "humbled Himself" – He did it!

-v. 8 "became obedient to the point of death" – willing to die / sacrifice Himself for others

You might say, "But where am I supposed to find the energy and power to do this when I feel worn out?"

Paul answers that in v. 13 when he says...

Phil 2:13 "God, who is at work within you, will give you the will and the power to achieve His purpose."

Whatever God asks you to do... and expects you to do... He will empower you to do. Marriage is God's idea. It wasn't designed to be lived without Him. There should be a WARNING LABEL on it that says, "Don't Try This Without God!"

Eccl. 4:9-12 says "Two are better than one, because they have good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion...though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken"

These verses show us one of the keys to a successful marriage. Notice, he doesn't just talk about two cords...he tells us that a threefold cord is not quickly broken. What does this mean? Who is the third cord? That 3rd cord is not a best friend...counselor...therapist...or financial planner. No! The third person in the equation has to be Jesus Christ Himself! A strong marriage cord will be made up of one woman and one man who put Jesus Christ at the center of their marriage and the center of their home.

Douglas Wilson writes "Marriage does not change what you are. It does, however, amplify what you are. This is why so many have trouble in marriage. When they come into an intimate relationship with another person, their self-centeredness is amplified many times over. No amount of marriage counseling can change that. A marriage can only be transformed when the individuals in that marriage are transformed. You cannot have your marriage transformed until each of you as individuals come to God through Christ. Then, as a result, the marriage will be changed. The good news must come first, and then the good advice. Until then, the only value that good advice has is that it reveals to you how far short of God's requirements you fall." *Persuasions*, Douglas Wilson, p. 58 & 59

Heb. 12:1-3 "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls."

Avoiding the Deadly Sins of Marriage

HOW TO BE A BARGAIN FOR YOUR MATE

(Are you selfish or willing to prefer others?)

The following quiz will help you discern how you are doing as a marriage partner. i.e., whether you are a bargain for your mate. Rating scale: Never =4: Seldom = 3: Sometimes = 2: Frequently = 1: Always = 0. Write the number that you judge to be true of your marriage on the blank following each question.

1. When a disagreement or problem arises, I focus on what is happening and what I should do to correct it instead of trying to understand why my mate does what he/she does. _____
2. When a problem arises I am ready to admit that I may be part of the problem. I focus on what I am doing wrong rather than on what the other person is doing wrong. _____
3. I realize that I cannot change the other person. He/she must want to change or all my efforts will compound the problem rather than solve the problem. _____
3. I realize that love is not primarily a feeling, but actions calculated to serve, please and help the other person in a God-honoring way. _____
4. I realize that love is not primarily a feeling, but actions calculated to Serve, please and help the other person in a God-honoring way. _____
5. I focus on changing my own behavior, attitudes, reactions and responses toward the other person. I plan specific, attainable, repeatable, positive changes that I can make. _____
6. I am constantly working to develop and maintain a good communication system. I know that relationships are hindered when there is no communication or the wrong kind of communication _____
7. I am working to develop and maintain many commonalities, common projects, common interests, recreational activities. I date my mate regularly. I do a variety of things with him/her. N I am creative in the expression of love and appreciation. _____
8. I recognize and allow for differences between people in general and my mate and me in particular. I know that men and women tend to view things differently. _____
9. I regularly practice the Golden Rule as stated in Matthew 7:12. I treat My mate as I would want him/her to treat me. _____
10. I major on the positive things in my mate and our relationship rather than the negative. I emphasize our commonalities rather than our differences (Philippians 4:8). _____
11. I practice the principle laid down in Luke 6:34, 35. I give and serve Expecting nothing in return. _____

12. I keep current. I deal with one problem at a time. I don't continue to have reruns on arguments from the past. I forgive and forget (Matthew 6:34; Ephesians 4:26).

13. I try to maintain a close relationship with God through Jesus Christ (John 14:6; I John 4:21; Matthew 22:37-39; Ephesians 5:21-33).

Number of 0 – 1 answers _____

Number of 2 – 4 answers _____

This quiz describes thirteen principles for developing and maintaining good relationships with other people. It describes how you can be the marriage partner God wants you to be. If you could honestly answer all questions with a 0 or a 1, you probably have a good relationship with your mate. If you answered the questions with a 2 – 4, plan how you can change to turn the answers into a 0 – 1. The more 0's or 1's you have, the better will be your relationship. The more 2's, 3's or 4's, the worse will be your relationship.