

Put Each Other First In Your Marriage!

We all know from our earliest days in school that $1 + 1 = 2$. But in **Gen. 2:24** we are told that “a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” (*emphasis added*) **When a man and woman come together in marriage, they will spend the rest of their lives together learning how to become one**, and I can tell you from experience, that’s not easy! I quickly discovered that everything about Sue and I was different from our physical bodies (tall and short!), our family backgrounds, our emotions and feelings, to our likes and dislikes, etc. Like most couples, when we got married, we thought that we knew everything about each other! It didn’t take too long, however, for us to both realize that we were very different and really knew very little about each other!

There’s a myth, ungodly belief, or lie (call it what you like!) out there that says, “If I marry the right person or my “soulmate,” we won’t ever have any problems and we will be in love and live happily ever after.” You need to get that thought out of your mind right now because it’s not going to happen! We all have to work through issues, deal with the inevitable changes in life, get rid of the “stuff” from our past that causes us to react the wrong way to our spouse, and learn how to forgive and release the past debts. **We all have to learn how to live with our spouse with love and respect and in peace and harmony.** So I would like to share a couple things that Sue and I have learned and are applying to our marriage that have brought a lot more joy, fulfillment, and love into our relationship.

$1 + 0 = 1$

A friend of ours asked the Father a while back how $1 + 1$ can ever equal one in a marriage like **Gen. 2:24** says it should. **Then the Lord spoke to her and explained that it only happens when you empty yourself out and become a “0” in the relationship.** That has really impacted me and the way I now respond to Sue. (I’ve not fully arrived yet, but I’m at least going in the right direction!) I’m not implying here that you don’t have an equal part in the relationship, don’t have a say in what happens, that your opinions and thoughts don’t count, or you’re just there to serve and be submissive to your spouse all the time. There still has to be honor, respect, acceptance, and love coming from both sides of the relationship.

However, there are several areas in our relationship where I have begun to apply this principle with good results. One is to be quick to ask forgiveness and say, “I was wrong.” **Those three words are very powerful in defusing tension and changing the feelings and emotions of the other person.** It doesn’t matter whether you know or think that you are right, and therefore, don’t have to admit any wrong doing. It’s more a matter of whether you want to be “right” or have a relationship! It requires humbling yourself, seeing things from their position, and respecting the opinions of your spouse. There are still some times when I can forget and get frustrated at Sue, but it now doesn’t feel good on the inside and I’m quicker to ask forgiveness and admit that I was wrong.

We’re All Different and “Messed Up!”

Another “0” is accepting your spouse for who they are and not trying to change them or wish that they were someone different. This one has been slow to develop and hard for me, but I am getting better at it! I have to keep reminding myself that Sue is a woman and that alone makes her very different than me in the way she thinks and responds to situations between us. Just the fact that her body temperature is different than mine has resulted in some major issues about how we control temperatures in the house. How much more peace and harmony there is when I just let go of my

position and allow her to feel comfortable in our house! The Eggerichs' book *Cracking the Communication Code* addresses these differences between men and women by referring to women speaking "pink" and men speak "blue." Just the reality that women speak and think differently than we men has been a great help in eliminating a lot of frustration for me and arguments with Sue over things that were just a misunderstanding because of the "language barrier." We have to become the "0" and see things from our spouse's viewpoint!

Another thing that accepting someone for who they are does for us is that it not only brings peace, but it brings joy. We all have a need to be seen, heard, understood, and accepted by others, especially those closest to us. We are more able to get in touch with our heart when we know that someone accepts us for who we are. It all starts with us as a child desiring to be accepted by our parents. If we did not feel accepted, we closed our heart and began to build a wall of protection that can carry on through the rest of our life. Rejection or fear of rejection begins to control our life and actions with others. **If our spouse begins to accept us as we are with all of our problems, shortcomings, differences, and "stuff," it can start to break down this wall of protection and allow us to fully open our heart to them.**

Love and Respect

The Eggerichs also talk about the "Crazy Cycle" in their book. **Eph. 5:21-33** says that each man is to love his wife and the wife is to respect her husband. However, when the man says, "I'll love her when she starts respecting me." and the wife says, "I'll respect him when he starts loving me," they both get on the "Crazy Cycle" where there is no end to the conflict or coming together in the marriage. **In order to break the "Crazy Cycle" and get into the "Energizing Cycle," either the man has to become a "0" and humble himself by deciding to love his wife whether she ever respects him, or the wife becomes a "0" by deciding to respect her husband whether he ever loves her.** Jimmy Evans says that, *"If either one or both partners in a marriage decide that there is nothing that you will ever say or do that would cause me to stop loving you, that marriage has a 100% chance of success."*

Becoming the Right Kind of Person

"Society tells us marriage is about meeting the right person. God tells us that marriage is about being the right kind of person." (*Jimmy Evans "Life Long Love Affair"*)

We need to ask ourselves two questions:

1. I wonder how I make (him/her) feel with my words and actions?
2. What would it be like to be married to me?

Just falling in love and getting married does not make you "soulmates." **Our soul involves our will and emotions, and we have to decide to become a "0" in order to become one together with a love that will last a lifetime.** We must become givers and not takers demanding our own way at the expense of our spouse. In marriage we are given the opportunity to bless and invest our whole life into another person. **Prov. 11:25** says, *"The generous soul will be made rich and he who waters will also water himself."* And the dynamic of **Luke 6:8** starts to become a reality in our marriage and life, *"give, and it shall be given to you, good measure, pressed down and shaken together, running over will be poured into your bosom and your soul. For with what measure that you use it will be measured back to you."*

"If you choose to put each other first today, you're making the decision to become soulmates and you're going to have a happier and healthier marriage!" Jimmy Evans