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## **Introduction -**

A lot of what I am going to talk about today, I also use when I do premarital counseling. My policy is to not do a wedding unless they are willing to do premarital counseling. These insights today are really good insights that not only help people understand marriage better, but also can improve existing marriages. And, much of this could even be used to understand regular relationships with people.

*Seven insights for creating a great marriage:*

### **I. God's Authority structure, plus love and respect**

Husbands love her as yourself, wives respect your husband.

[Ephesians 5:33](#) (NKJV)

<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless let each one of you in particular **so love his own wife as himself**, and **let the wife see that she respects *her* husband.**

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If a husband truly loved his wife like he loved himself, he would treat her good in every way he can. The way this is worded is really fascinating because it covers most everything.

*What does it mean to respect your husband?* When we respect someone we show appreciation by thanking him for what he does, complimenting him in front of others, It also involved encouraging him, being respectful of his space and feelings, accepting that he is not perfect, respectful of his desires.

Treating someone in a respectful manner is something we should want to do because it is the right thing to do. I have yet to ever meet a perfect person. But, I can still try to treat people with respect. I have yet to ever meet someone that I agree with them on everything. But, I can still try to treat them with respect.

Going back to the husband's role, if the husband loved his wife like he loves himself, it would help make it easier for her to show respect to him. Both husband and wife have a job to do.

In a relationship, when you're not happy about something, you still need to try to keep doing the right thing. By doing so, you make it easier for the relationship to fix what either one, or both, are not happy about.

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## Colossians 3:18-19 (NKJV)

<sup>18</sup> Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

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Contrary to the way the world looks at things today, the husband should be the leader of the family. It is the way God intended for it to be.

Wives are supposed to do it as unto the Lord, or as it is fitting in the Lord.

*When the husband is not honoring God according to the bible:*

The tricky part happens if the husband is doing things in the relationship that dishonors God.

When you are in a role of submission, there may come a time you have to pray something like this: "Father, I am trying to obey scripture, but you see what is going on. My spouse is not honoring You. I ask You to deal with him, to show him what will help him follow what your bible says."

Think of David and Saul. David was in a position of submission because he was not king yet. He was very careful to keep doing right with Saul even though Saul was treating David wrong. When you read many of the Psalms that David wrote, you can see David's frustrations. You can see that he was trying to honor God & honor authority, yet there was emotional pain for David in it all.

If a husband is wrong in their attitudes or how they handle you, and they are refusing to treat you in a biblical manner, I believe the best thing to do is turn them over to God. Then, you ask God to open the door for you to talk to them if you are supposed to do so. Ask God to give you the perfect words to say, at the perfect time.

*What if what your spouse is doing is wrong in the Lord's eyes, but not necessarily to you?* This can be cases where they are treating others wrong. Or, it can be cases where they are stealing, using drugs, or anything illegal. Pray a lot, but know that you are going to have to eventually object to what they are doing.

The example what comes to my mind is Ananias (husband) and Sapphira (wife) in [Acts 5:1-10](#). They sold a piece of land and gave money to the church. But, the husband lied about giving all the money to the church. Granted, they didn't have to give all the money to the church. That was their decision. Where they got into trouble is the husband acted like they gave it all to the church. God struck down the husband. Later that day, when the wife came in with the apostles, she did not know what happened to her husband. She was asked how much money they received for the land, and she lied like her husband. God struck her down, as well.

You might think "Wow, that that is pretty harsh of God to do such a thing." The fact

of the matter is when there are seasons of time that God is doing an extra powerful work, disobedience during that time is a bigger thing.

Here is how we can relate this to a married couple. If one is doing something wrong, and the other one either allows it, or goes along with it, there is responsibility on the spouse who is letting it go.

*The last thing I will mention about [Colossians 3:18](#):*

Submission works best when both the leader and those who have to submit, are doing their part with what scripture says to do. It gets tough when either person is not following scripture. And, it gets tougher when your spouse is doing something wrong with others, or illegal. But, I believe you need to address it. Just be prayed up when you do it, used God's words, and handle it right on your end.

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*The very next verse in Colossians, says this:*

**[Colossians 3:19](#)** (NKJV)

<sup>19</sup> Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them (*Don't treat them in a bitter or hateful way*)

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Once again, we have this command to the husband to truly love your wife. Do not do, or say things, that are hateful, or show a bitter attitude.

We should not be surprised that something like this is in the bible. If you read down a little further in verse 21 you see where fathers are told to not provoke their children. (same type of thing in [Ephesians 6:4](#)) Really, what verse 19 is telling the husband is to not treat their wives like that either.

*Wuest Word Study says it like this:*

**[Colossians 3:18](#)** (WuestNT)

<sup>18</sup> ... Husbands, be loving your wives with a divine love which impels you to deny yourselves for their benefit, and stop being bitter and harsh to them.

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*In [Ephesians 5:25](#) husbands are told:*

**[Ephesians 5:25](#)** (NKJV)

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

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When you look at those words, the husband loves the wife like Christ loves us. *So, how does Christ treat us? How sacrificial was Christ? Did Christ overuse His authority on people?* Think about how he washed the feet of His disciples. Christ

gave Himself for the church, for us. You could tell He had powerful authority when He did things like stopping the storm when the disciples were in the boat. But, you never see Christ shoving His authority down people's throats.

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*Even though this next set of verses is talking to the elders of the church, it still shows how people in authority positions should treat others:*

**1 Peter 5:1-3** (NIV)

- <sup>1</sup> To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed:
  - <sup>2</sup> Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve;
  - <sup>3</sup> **not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples** to the flock.
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We never use our authority to "lord things over" others. We do not shove our way down their throats. All authority should be careful to never be that way, whether that authority is a boss, or a leader in the church, or a husband.

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*The 2nd major thing about a good marriage is to also understand that:*

**II. The Two Became One Flesh**

**Genesis 2:22-24** (NKJV)

- <sup>22</sup> Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, & He brought her to the man.
  - <sup>23</sup> And Adam said: "This *is* now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."
  - <sup>24</sup> Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, **& they shall become one flesh.**
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To find God's will, I truly believe that the two really need to be one. I believe that also means in finding God's will on decisions. Each spouse is a safeguard to making sure we make the right decisions. If we are not in agreement, I believe the best thing to do is back off until we are.

When it comes to major purchases, this is very important, or any big decisions for that matter. Try to move carefully with each other, communicate a lot until you are "one." Ultimately, if that cannot happen, and we absolutely have to proceed on the decision right now, then you may have to move forward with the husband being the one to

make the decision. But, I believe that should be very rare.

I believe this phrase "become one flesh" means they need to find agreement. Just because because the bible gives the final authority to the husband, does not mean he gets to make all of the decisions. The two need to be in agreement, and the best way for that to happen is when both find God's will, sense God's peace in a matter. If the wife feels like she is being "run over," so to speak, by the husband, she needs to turn him over to God for Him to deal with him. If the husband pushes ahead, and will not be open to God, the judgement is going to come down on him. Spouses who try to get into agreement with one another provide a safeguard, a protection for doing the right thing.

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### III. The unifying connection of Spirit, Soul, and Body

*There is an interesting verse in the bible found in [1 Thess. 5](#). It goes like this:*

**[1 Thessalonians 5:23](#)** (NKJV)

<sup>23</sup> Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole **spirit, soul, and body** be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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The fascinating thing about this verse is it shows that there are 3 parts to men and women. Paul was asking the Thessalonian church to be completely committed to God (sanctified, set apart for God's work and God's will). He wanted the people to understand that this involves every part of their life - their spirit, their soul (personality), and their body. *Why say it like that if man and woman does not have 3 parts?*

But, here is something fascinating. God kind of has 3 parts, although they are separate, and yet one - God the Spirit, God the main personality (Father), and Jesus came in bodily form. I am certainly NOT trying to teach a new doctrine with that comment. I am only saying it is very fascinating. Things like that we will know more about when we get to heaven someday. We do know that we are made in the image of God. ([Gen 1:27](#))

*But, for us, it does seem like this holds true that there are 3 parts to us:*

#### **Spirit**

I do not 100% know if we are born with any kind of a spirit, or not. If we are, I believe it is probably mostly dormant until we get saved. I say it that way because I have met unsaved people who occasionally sense God saying something to them. *Does that have to mean they have some kind of spirit?* Not necessarily. It could be true, or it could just be that God occasionally speaks to the unsaved regardless of

them having a spirit.

I tend to believe we are not born with any kind of spirit, then a spirit comes into our lives when we get saved. It comes alive in us. But, I really do not care whether we are born with a spirit, or not. The fact is if you get saved that is definitely going to be the place God lives in you and God speaks to you. That part of you comes alive.

A spouse with a spirit and a spouse without a spirit (or doesn't hear God):

I know of 2 marriages where the spouse married someone who was not saved, nor had a desire to walk with God. In both cases the wife thought she could change him. Both cases, the husband never did become a christian. In one of those cases, the husband said "If you marry me, I will go to church with you." They never did do it. In at least one of the cases, the unsaved spouse held them back in being led more accurately by God. I saw many ways the unsaved husband negatively influenced them even in the church.

If you are in a marriage like this already, PLEASE DO NOT go home from church and complain about any of the people in the church. Wives who do that can guarantee their spouse will probably never get saved. I truly believe one of the two women were doing that. That is a very foolish thing to do.

### **Soul**

The soul is our main personality.

### **Body**

We all know what a body is.

**When we die**, I believe scripture seems to be clear that we lose our earthly body, but our soul and our spirit go to heaven. We are given a new body at some point. At what point that happens, I'm not a 100% sure. *Does it happen immediately, or does it happen at the 2nd coming of Christ when the dead are resurrected and given a transformed new body?*

We know that Jesus had a new body after His resurrection. *Once we die do we have a new body instantly like Jesus' body, or do we get a new body later on?* It would seem like it is at the 2nd coming of Christ.

But, we do know when we die our spirit and soul are going with us.

### **Coming back to the point of how spirit, soul, and body relates to marriage.**

This is something I teach in my premarital counseling class. I believe the best marriages are when we can be as one as possible in our spirit, in our soul, & with our body. For

example **if we are one in spirit**, that means we are "one" with wanting God's will in every decision we make.

**If we are one in soul**, that means we have a lot of things in our personality we can get along with, or agree with. It does not mean we are exactly the same in personality, as how we handle things, or what all we enjoy doing, or what things we like, etc. But, the more "one" we are in our souls, the better the marriage.

**When we are one in body**, well, that is important, too. We will leave that one alone for now because of the setting we are in. If this was a couples class, I would be more blunt.

*Can a marriage make it with only 2 of 3 of those? Yes. Would it be better if we are unified on all 3 levels? Absolutely.*

There are marriages where the two people are not one in soul (personality). They have drastically different personalities, and interests. That is tough. I guess, how well that works would depend on *how different are the personalities? Do they at least like doing the same things, or many of the same things? Do they have the same goals? Does one want to save every penny, and the other wants to spend? (that actually happens often) Can there be a balance in these things? Also, will one be willing to tolerate a lot of the "soul" differences?*

Here is one that can get real tricky. *Is one very, very dominant, and the other one does not like that part of their spouse? Is one hateful at times? Is one more demanding?* I, for one, would not deal well in that kind of relationship.

When people date they really need to try to see if they are united in soul - in personality. *Do we have enough in common that we can enjoy most of the same things?* It would be a bummer if they like totally different things, and have very little in common. Of course, when they date they need to be sure they can unify in spirit, soul, and body.

*Can we still make it work if we are not united in soul?* It's not what I would recommend if you are dating someone. If you are already married, well, you probably need to work out some compromises and be very flexible.

Laurie and I pretty much like the same things. There is very little that we don't enjoy doing. Probably the only difference is she would want to make more long trips in life, and I have little interest in that. But, for most everything else, we like mostly the same things. Even with most tv programs, we pretty much like the same things. CSI programs, and we even like the new Doc program. In fact, Laurie is the CSI of our family. She will come up with these crazy theories about what happened. I tell her "You really are CSI."

There are a few programs Laurie likes that I don't like. She mainly watches those when I have to be gone, or I'm over at the church, or am busy with something else.

### **Coming back to Body**

Without turning this sermon into too much detail, you need to be on the same page with that area of your life as well. I have counseled many, many men where that totally changed not long after they got children. The men I counseled with were totally discouraged from that. And, the wife didn't seem to care. Let's leave it at that. A few of the wives were also very strong in the church, yet neglected that with their husbands. I don't have a clue how they justified that. I am not trying to say this is always the wife's fault. I am a male, it's very unlikely a woman is going to come to me to counsel about this topic.

Look at [I Corinthians 7:3-5](#) if you do not feel that body is important in relationships.

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So, ideally, to have the best marriage, spirit, soul, and body needs to be in unity if we want the best marriage. Spirit will be the best part, because when people listen to God good things can happen. And, if they both listen in their spirit it will help the difficulties of soul and body.

These next 4 points are effective techniques to greatly improve a marriage. They really are from a counseling perspective. But, if you evaluate each of them, they really are expressions of love, ways to stay away from hatred, and all the techniques are really rooted in ways of treating one another that, I believe, the bible would be supportive of.

I will spend most of my time on Love Bank. Then mention points 5 to 7 as very important, but not spend as much time on.

## **IV. Love Bank**

This is a very important part of this message, and I saved one of the best thoughts for our 4th main point.

When Laurie and I were going to Lebanon Church of the Nazarene I was asked to teach a series on Wednesday nights. I chose to do a 6 or 8 week Marriage series. I used a book called His Needs Her Needs by Dr. Willard Harley, Jr. If I remember right, I might have even added some of his thoughts from Love Busters, too. I'm not sure.

In my opinion, the best part of that series was helping people to understand that how you treat one another every day is going to lead you either to a closer relationship, or a rela-



tionship that is heading toward disaster some day.

To make this as simple as I can, Dr. Harley says that when you first get married you are full of lots of excitement about the new life you are beginning. He calls all those positive thoughts you have about each other, your "Love Bank." Each of you, husband and wife, have a love bank, full of love feelings. When you first marry, that bank is very full of love money. Your love banks at that time are pretty rich.

But, as you start living every day together, you will either add to the love bank with good experiences that are much like adding a deposit to the bank account. OR, you will make withdrawals from that Love Bank because of things you did, or said, to each other.

And, every day you can be adding to that Love Bank by kind things you do, or say. My

Dad treated my Mom incredibly well. He made her laugh (a deposit in the bank), he helped around the house (big deposit in the bank), he was kind to her (deposit in the bank), but he could get bull headed at times, opinionated, and crabby (withdrawals from the bank). He ended his life on earth with a huge Love Bank for mom, a huge love bank of great memories.

So, you are adding or subtracting from the Love Bank by everything you do, every single day. If you have a little attitude, there is a subtraction from the bank. If you are disrespectful, or hateful, there is a subtraction. If you do not care about something that is important to your spouse there is a subtraction. If you shove your way through in buying something she didn't want you to buy, a fairly large subtraction could happen.

Dr. Harley's point was you are doing one or the other every single day, and if you keep mainly doing the subtractions, someday you will be overdrawn, no love left, and the marriage will end in a disaster, or you will set up your partner for an affair.

Love bank is so true. If you continue with that attitude if "Well, he or she will get over it" you are going to be heading toward a bankrupt account.

And, here is the thing, different things you do for, or say to each other have different deposit values. A hug might be \$20 or if your spouse loves those, it might be \$100. Cooking dinner for her might be \$20 or \$125. Two people who truly love each other should know those values, and should also know the things that are HUGE withdrawals.

The theory of Love Bank should be on your mind in your marriage. But, whether it is on your mind or not, regardless, it is going on. So, it would be better to doing those sweet things that make your relationship have a lot in the bank, and avoid the withdrawals.

## **V. "Negative feeds more negative" and "Positive feeds more positive."**

You need to really get ahold of this because it is so true.

In no time at all a relationship can be heading for a mess when one big negative causes one of the spouses to hold back on being their wonderful self. Maybe that big negative, caused some anger, then some sarcasm starts coming out. Then the other spouse reacts wrong to this. Negative feeds negative.

Positive feeds positive. Every wonderful (positive) experience usually makes the other spouse feel like doing the same. Every sweet thing you do. Everything helpful thing you do, brings positive feelings.

In many ways, the relationship, at any point and time, is moving either toward negative or more toward positive.

Even though I did not spend a lot of time talking about this one, keeping it in mind in a relationship is very important.

## **VI. Constant growth whereby both spouses are constantly getting to be better people, growing, maturing, and becoming all God wants each to become.**

This one is HUGE. When this happens it will cause each spouse to love what they see with the other spouse. It makes both more proud of each other, as well as makes them wonder "*how much better of a person will they become?*" It is like the marriage bonus they never thought they were going to get.

But, without that growth, if one spouse has been somewhat unhappy, what the other spouse is doing if they aren't growing, is forcing the unhappy spouse to be more tolerant. If that happen, there can be a feeling of giving up, "I guess I'm always going to have to put up with this." In other words, a loss of hope. Roses probably are never going to fix that. And, the Love Bank is going to get really small.

## **VII. Good communication greatly enhances a marriage.**

*Can we talk out any issues so we can improve the relationship?*

### **A. There are 3 ways of communicating:**

#### **1. No communicating, just holding everything in.**

This is really not communicating at all, and is very hard on you emotionally.

#### **2. Indirect communication.**

This can be sarcastic remarks, angry statements, comments made with a two-fold meaning, and unhappy body language. It can even be passive-aggressive actions. (which are things you do on purpose to hurt your partner, but they can't prove it)

Usually it is one main person who does this, and it forces the other person to try to figure out what is going on. This is a terrible, damaging, way of communication, and just adds more hurt and damage to the relationship. (negative feeds negative) It makes it very difficult to change anything for the better.

### **3. Direct communication.**

This needs to be done as kind as possible, and presented in a way that makes it easy for the other person to correct behaviors that are not working well in the relationship. In order to do this well, it is best to calm down before the talk. Do not accuse the person. Stay away from "You always." Mainly focus on how when they do such- n- such it makes you feel ... (like this). Focus on the suggested behavior would help me feel (this way) and feel more love to you.

## **B. Things that hinder good communication**

### **1. How shy a person is.**

Shy people do not feel confident to discuss a problem. If you are married to a shy person you will need to help them feel comfortable to want to share.

### **2. How difficult it is for the person to express their feelings, or feel they can compete in the discussion about a problem.**

In other words, they do not feel they can adequately express themselves, and would lose the discussion anyway. Some people are just not real good with words, whereas other people are. On this person, they feel like it is useless to try to talk it out.

If you truly love them, you need to help them express their feelings without trying to defeat them.

### **3. If one spouse feels the other spouse will just get mad and blast them, they will not want to communicate.**

It is just easier to let them have their way.

### **4. They have had bad experiences in trying to talk with the spouse in the past.**

They are having a hard time thinking of when, if ever, they have had a good discussion with their spouse that helped them feel like something was solved.

### **5. They are made to feel stupid because of their feelings.**

Good, loving, communication must be there. Try to "word things" in a way that will not be an attack. Try to make it easy for your partner to understand your feelings, and word it so it is easy for them to change.

We cannot make people change, but, we can approach them in a way that makes it easier for them to accept changing.

## **Conclusion -**

As Christians, our best witness should be first done at home. If you cannot be a strong Christian at home, if you cannot be kind, not controlling, not demanding, not hateful there *then what kind of Christian are you?* The best witness for who you are should come from your spouse. If they have great things to say about you, then chances are high you really do live for God.

An understanding of all 7 of these can greatly improve a marriage. If you are not good at some of these 7 things, ask God to help you change. Consider letting God help you find a good book that will help in changing the things you are struggling with.

Today, we looked at:

- I. God's Authority structure + Love and Respect for each other**
- II. The Two Became One**
- III. The perfect blend - unity in Spirit, Soul, and Body**
- IV. The Love Bank**
- V. "Negative feeds more negative" and "Positive feeds more positive."**
- VI. Constant growth on both spouses where each one is constantly getting better, growing, maturing, become all God wants each to become.**
- VII. Good Communication**

If you have done it wrong, take a moment and ask forgiveness of your spouse. Then start heading in the right direction, building your love bank deposits before it goes bankrupt, read more, work at making it better. The world is too frustrating of a place to have tension at home. We need a place of refuge, comfort, strength, and to rebuild. Our marriage needs to be that for both spouses.

## **Closing prayer - Lee Conner**