

Nampa Bible Church Home Groups - Marriage Foundations Part 3: Relating Together

There are several areas of our lives that are a sort of window into our innermost being. Marriage is one of those areas. How we relate to our spouse is one of the most direct testimonies of, or indictments against, our own level of personal maturity. Most often our own weaknesses play a devastating role in our marriages. Our final foundational lesson tackles the topic of relating to our spouse, and ultimately to God.

- 1) **Based on our past lessons, what is the goal we are to help our spouse towards? Why is this so vitally important?** The most important thing we can do for our spouse is to honor them in a way that draws Christ out of them. Our duty is to see our spouse in light of what they are to become without becoming bitter or complacent about whom they are and to do this without acting in pride. We are to work and shape our spouse and allow them to do the same for us. From a personal standpoint, when we are striving to help our spouse honor God it puts us in a more selfless state and thus helps us become more Christlike as well. A great example of this is seen in Ephesians 5:25 where husbands are told to love their wives and to give themselves for her so that she can become complete.
- 2) **Why do you think we get bitter or complacent about our spouse's shortcomings or failures to achieve the ideal? Does "righteous frustration" play a role when we see our spouse sin?** We may become bitter when we are filled with pride and selfishness and when we're in denial of our own spiritual shortcomings. It often comes down to the simple fact that we don't want to be irritated or inconvenienced. If we're helping one another to be like Christ we can't legitimately get frustrated when we see our spouse fail. Righteous frustration, as we would expect God to be righteously frustrated with our sin, is almost impossible for humans to achieve. For us to genuinely be frustrated only because they're dishonoring God and stealing joy from themselves, and not because of how it impacts us, is a tough truth to live out. More often than not James 4:1-3, which says that our own selfishness is the source of quarrels, is the true issue at hand. We should always keep the log in our own eye in mind (Matt 7:4).
- 3) **What is a godly way to handle our spouse's shortcomings?** One great Biblical example is how the prophet Nathan approached David about his sin with Bathsheba (II Sam. 12). Instead of just rebuking David, he led him to see the truth on his own. This is a good example for us to follow with our spouse. If we can gently help them to come to see their sin on their own, it will be a blessing to the relationship. Another key Bible passage is seen in our key marriage verse, Phil 2:3-4 which says "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."
- 4) **How important are our words in relating to our spouse? How about listening?** As is true in other relationships, our words should be always wholesome and encouraging (Eph 4:29). In fact, our words and how we talk to each other is typically a reflection of the quality of our character. The book of James is loaded with truth on speaking and listening. For example, James 1:19 tells us that we should be slow to speak and quick to hear and James 3:5-12 speaks of the destructive capabilities of the tongue. If we truly believe the concept that every word we speak either calls beauty into existence or destroys by force we should sow our words carefully with the intent to bring about a good harvest.
- 5) **Is it possible to fully know our spouse and their heart? Should we ever assume we know our spouse "completely"?** While we are aware that we can never fully know our spouses heart, we are still to be a student of our spouse. We are to consider them a mystery that is deserving of constant exploration. We are to strive to have a common heart, common goals and to know all the intimate details of their lives.
- 6) **How should we view conflict? Is conflict inevitable?** Conflict is inevitable because we are different people. Since no two people are the same we will have different views of the same facts. We all interpret facts a little differently. Two people can see an accident and both will see it just a bit differently. Therefore, we should view conflict as a chance to see things from the other persons' point of view. It is an opportunity to know your spouse better, to see their patterns of reasoning. It is an opportunity to learn from each other and grow together.

The goal of our marriages should be to honor God *and* to honor our spouse so that *they* can honor God. We should strive to enhance our spouse's glory so they can live out the glory of God.