

A Critical Ingredient in Any Christ-Centered Marriage

The creation of our spouse was a certain level of God's creativity and genius. Our spouse, among the billions of people in the world, is unique in so many ways. His or her family's experiences, walk with God, friends, education, choices, ambitions and gifts make him or her the way they are.

I believe it is our privilege, over the course of our entire lives, to get to know and learn about these unique creatures, our spouses, as they evolve throughout our servant marriage. It is not only our privilege, but our calling to serve them "till death do us part."

Your spouse has an amazing spirit, given to him or her by God. God, as a gift, also gives their spirit to you. This gift, like so many gifts of God, needs to be personally cared for and maintained by you.

Your spouse has an almost incomprehensible soul. Their mind, will and emotions is under your care and influence for decades. This area of his or her being will also require care from you in a servant marriage.

Our spouse is above all a spirit being. At their core is a spirit that best operates if their spirit is being fed and nourished.

Now, before I talk more about your spouse, I want to first talk about you. You are a spirit being as well. Taking care of yourself spiritually is definitely the first order of business to be able to spiritually serve your spouse.

In Romans 1:15 (NIV), Paul says, "That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel ..." I cannot serve very well spiritually if I am not spiritually consistent and growing. The reverse happens

if a spouse is spiritually weak and inconsistent. He or she will negatively impact your marriage rather than positively impact it.

I said all of this to say that reading your Bible, praying, worshipping and growing spiritually daily and regularly is critical to having a servant marriage. If you do not serve God well, you will be more likely not to serve your spouse well either.

Regular church attendance and meeting regularly with a friend of the same gender is very helpful. When you grow spiritually, everyone in your life benefits.

Your spouse also benefits greatly when you pray together. As a servant, you do not have to worry about this being your personality or not. It is your responsibility to attempt to connect together spiritually. Praying together daily or regularly in the presence of God the Father and God the father-in-law is a blessing to Him. I believe He loves being with both of you at the same time as well as individually. He created this trinity of marriage with you both so that He could fellowship and commune with you together. In a servant marriage, your spiritual walk involves both of you together, and not just you as a single man or woman.

Remember, marriage is a three-person entity, not just two. Therefore, I encourage you to enjoy the third person in your marriage together on a regular basis. Beyond praying together, some couples read the Bible together, which is great. When Lisa and I do this, we discuss what we learn for ourselves, not what we think the other person should be learning or applying. Spiritual time together is a way for the servant to honor his or her spouse. Being consistent in spiritual time together is vital for your marriage.

The soul of your spouse has been given to you to serve, bless and support. You are to be part of its healing and growth,

standing by as they take risks, and watching them discover their own amazingness.

In Scripture, the soul is described as the mind, will and emotions. Understanding how and why your spouse thinks is a lifelong journey of listening and understanding them. As a servant to your spouse, your ability to serve will be expanded or limited by how well you understand your spouse.

Emotions can drive the will as well. In fact, this is by far the most volatile driver of the will. When emotions drive the will, facts and truth can be close at hand or far away, regardless of which gender you are.

As a servant to your spouse, you want to do your best to know who is driving the will before you engage it. If you engage the will before having a clear understanding of who is driving at various speeds, you might be more likely to be engaged in a hit-and-run accident or other incident involving a motor vehicle.

Another aspect of the will that is important to you is to encourage the will when it is operating properly or growing. If your spouse is utilizing their will to learn more, go to school, expand a talent, address difficult issues, build positive relationships or just get their body back in shape, you want to be their cheerleader.

Your encouragement and praise of them as their spouse can help them believe in themselves. Your praise can also help your spouse take one more step toward reaching the goal they have set out to reach. Your voice can strengthen or weaken the will of your spouse, depending on whether you serve well with praise or poorly by being critical. As a servant toward your spouse, you would do well to strengthen and encourage your spouse to use his or her will to glorify God, the Creator.

As a servant of your spouse, you will want to learn how he or she takes course correction in regard to their will. Do they

do it primarily with the Lord, friends of the same gender, through reading more information, by researching his or her family, pastor or other person of influence? Once you learn this, encourage them in the process that works best.

Your service toward your spouse is given to you by God and empowered by His Spirit over your lifetime. He created marriage for you to become Christlike and smile as you begin to look like Him and talk like Him to your spouse. {eo}

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