

Don't Neglect This Vital Key to a Healthy Marriage

I'm sure you remember as I do, as clear as if it was yesterday, the feeling of standing in front of the crowd of family and friends with the pastor before us. He asked the first promise to each of us individually in the form of a question.

"Do you promise to forsake all others?" We acknowledged in some way "I do." This is the first promise we committed to being a lover-spouse. In its most simple meaning to a young 20-year-old couple, that promise means "you will not have any other girlfriend or boyfriends other than this person standing in front of you the rest of your life." However, this promise goes way deeper and continues to grow in meaning over time.

The promise to forsake all others means much more than not having other romantic or sexual relationships, but let's first explore this primary aspect of the promise we've made.

We all know a Christian couple who have been damaged and divorced because of some form of infidelity. Circumstances surrounding the dissolution of their marriage might involve a long sexual affair, a one-night stand, an anonymous encounter from someone via the internet or even paid-for sex.

I counsel couples struggling with infidelity. Couples fly in to Colorado Springs on a weekly basis to visit my offices from all over the world to attend intensive sessions to repair all forms of infidelity.

When a couple models their marriage after the paradigm of husband and wife, they create a set of rules to perform by. They tend to move toward more of a functionship than a relationship and stop really being lovers.

Quietly they begin to feel less a priority to their spouse because in a functionship, the priority is managing the marriage around all the other priorities. The task of managing those other priorities has replaced connection, quality time and dreaming together. Dating has lost its priority and sex has moved to familiar or “have-to” attitude rather than a “get-to” attitude.

Pain begins to impact the marriage. This pain was either created within the marriage due to infidelity or another betrayal or is due to issues one or both the individuals didn't deal with prior to the marriage.

Let's quickly touch upon the matter about repairing past issues. Such issues can consist of family of origin stuff, prior romantic/sexual relationships, abortion, alcohol, drug or pornography addictions. These issues can contribute to how honest or mature you can be in your marriage. I will address this further in a future chapter. However, the following biblical illustration expresses how important God thought it was to heal before marriage.

Genesis 2:20-21: “But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So, the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh.”

After God anesthetized Adam, performed surgery, he “closed up” Adam or healed him. God did not want Adam's marriage, or any marriage for that matter, to be based on one person's pain. Our pain, regardless of what it was from our past, is ours to allow God to heal. If you didn't work on your past pain before marriage, then attack these issues as soon as possible.

Couples who have drifted into a dry functional marriage need to treat the pain in some way. Some turn to God and will pray while others turn to helpful resources, books, counseling and marriage seminars. Sadly, however, some turn to “others” and

“others” can be a plethora of options. Turning to others begins to erode the promise we made to one another to forsake all others. {eoa}

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