

More Godly Principles to Steer Your Marriage Clear of Sexual Disaster

Last week, I shared with you that, during my 25-year career, I have counseled thousands of men who have traveled the road of the young man in Proverbs 7—the road to trouble and sexual disaster. It's a road that has been traveled by millions of men over thousands of years in every culture.

It's sad, and it's discouraging. But men, there is something you can do about it and stay pure in your marriage.

I also shared six principles to keep you off this road, ones should share with your wife. Here are five more:

1. Praise and touch. In counseling men for more than 25 years, I can say without any reservations that the vast majority of men feel loved and appreciated by being praised and physically touched. If you're like most of us, this will be an issue you will have to address, or it can leave you vulnerable as a single or married man.

If you're married, talk to your wife about your need to be touched a few times a week. Now if you ask for sex every time she tries to be affectionate, you must take responsibility if your wife holds back from touching you because she doesn't always want to have sex. So separate the need for touch and sex. It's totally acceptable to ask for touch, but separate this so your wife feels safe in touching you.

There are women who find touch challenging even within marriage. They may be abuse survivors, have had unaffectionate parents or feel their husband is overly needy to desire so much touch. She may also be an intimacy anorexic which we will talk more about later. In that case, she is intentionally not

touching you because she knows you like it, and it would bring you closer to her. Intimacy anorexics desire a certain amount of distance in their marriage, so they won't touch you.

If you appeal to your wife, and she refuses to meet your desire for touch, get help. Go together to a pastor, mentor couple or counselor. If she is starving for intimacy because you don't pray or share your heart, give her a safe place to vent. If, however, it is her issue, it offers her a place to grow.

Praise is also important to men. I would say before you ask your wife for praise that you first ask yourself how often and what type of praise you are sowing into your wife's heart. Are you praising who she is or only what she does? Are you giving praise with enthusiasm or in a monotone? Think about this first before you ask for praise.

Take a moment. Where do you hear words like "Great job, you're smart, kind, creative, hardworking"? If this happens mostly outside of your marriage, talk to your wife. You might want to do what Lisa and I do: we give each other two praises a day. This keeps our needs for praise a priority in our marriage.

Single guys, also be wise about the women you let praise or touch you on a regular basis. Women know that men like praise and touch, and some will use this knowledge for their advantage to seduce you.

A rule of thumb for me is that if a woman is praising me, I am cautious. If it continues, I am very cautious, because deep down, I know I'm not that amazing. If a woman touches me, especially if it's on a regular basis, I set definite boundaries so she understands not to do so.

2. Respect. Respect is a core issue for men. Wives are told to respect their husbands (see Eph. 5:22), but to be honest, some men make that difficult. If you don't keep your word, keep up with home projects, pray with her, do the dishes, laundry and

try to love her the way she wants to be loved, then it will be hard to respect you. Ask yourself if your behavior around the house and toward your wife is truly respectable. If the answer is no, you are creating a very difficult environment for your wife to respect you.

You need respect, but if you are not giving respect by serving well, you will create a woman who has to nag and be critical, and you will feel less respected.

Firstly, work on the respect you're giving to your wife as well as your behaviors around the house. Then, define for yourself what respect would look like. If you think it's obedience, you are too immature to be respected. So try again, and discover for yourself how you would feel respected. Then talk to your wife about that. If you get nowhere, talk to a mentor couple, pastor or counselor to have this issue resolved so that respect is a common commodity in your marriage.

If your respect needs are primarily met outside of your marriage, you are vulnerable to a female's respect. Please address this issue, so you don't find yourself walking down the road to trouble.

3. Daily Declaration. I find making a daily commitment to stay on the right road and avoid the road to trouble is helpful. I accept that I am at war, not just with the devil and this very sexual culture, but I am also at war with me. James 1:14 says we are drawn away by our own lust.

That means left to myself, I could lust, I could think higher of myself than I should, or feel entitled to a better wife, life or something else. I am like you in a battle of my own flesh. Here is something I have learned to do to declare war on my flesh.

As part of my prayer in the morning, as I stated earlier, many times before my feet even hit the floor, I declare a few commitments to the Lord. One of those is to love and protect

all women today, to hate all lust of all women in my heart or my mind and to recognize all women are made by God, for God and will go back to God.

This daily declaration has put a stake in the ground so deep inside me that I can't explain it. It's as though I've told myself how the day is going to be. If I am tempted to look twice at a woman, a voice inside will ask me, *Are you protecting her?* This daily declaration tells my flesh that today I am focused on winning any battle that comes up in this area. I make this declaration even if I'm just going to be hanging out at home with Lisa all day. It's become part of what I do when I wake up.

4. Prayer and the war. Prayer is a critical part of staying off the road to trouble. Praying daily as a Christian man is essential, whether you pray on your knees, in your truck, with hands up or down. Connecting to God, praising Him and listening to Him are critical in order to walk in any spiritual strength.

Reading, memorizing, listening to and meditating on the Bible is important to stay strong. I not only read the Bible, but I like to listen to it on CD on my drive to work. Revelation from the Word is sweet and strengthening. When we fear God in a respectful manner, we want to pray and read His Word.

I am so saddened by men who only hear, "I have to pray and read my Bible?" when I talk to them. These men have no clue that as Christians we have the honor of praying and gleaning wisdom from the Bible. As a lost person, I had no desire for these behaviors. As a believer, I know it's a privilege to get to pray and read the Word.

5. Hero in one story. Most of us men love a good hero epic story. You know the classic theme: Good guy gets into some conflict or trouble. He then meets Merlyn, Mickey Mouse or gets the magic power, gem or formula and fights the good

fight, defeats the foe of some kind, gets the beautiful woman and obtains the kingdom.

These are hero epic literature themes, and most guys love these stories. In the real world, heroes are limited to one story each. There are millions of maidens in distress (note to single guys—they are in distress for a reason).

You and I can only be a hero in one woman's story. You guessed it: the story of our wife or future wife. I can't be a hero to the single mom, single woman, woman in a bad marriage or divorced woman, rich or poor. No matter what situation a woman may be in, I am not able to be her hero. That job belongs to God and a man who can commit his whole life to that role.

I can only be a hero to Lisa and my children, and you can only be a hero to your wife and family. If I want to be a hero, I will work through my marriage and family issues. I die to myself, serve well, get scars and stay off the road to trouble and on the clean road God has marked out for me to travel.
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