

The No. 1 Team Member in Your Marriage

Henry was a great young man. He went to church, joined the military and now was serving in a local government job. He met Marci at church, and they began dating. Eventually, Henry asked Marci's dad for her hand in marriage.

All was well as the couple prepared for marriage. Henry was courting the favor of Marci and her family, including her dad. Henry made some effort to have time with his soon to be father-in-law. Henry and Marci married, and all was well until they came back from their honeymoon. Henry decided they should move far away from her family. He became very distant from Marci's family. He wouldn't go visit her father or her family for many years.

If the father-in-law called, Henry would avoid conversations with him. This became so bad that Henry didn't see or talk to Marci's family or father in more than seven years. Now you can only imagine how Marci's dad felt: hurt, confused, conned, angry, and to say the least, he probably didn't like Henry for stealing his daughter and not bringing her back home to visit.

This truly is a sad story. Unfortunately for Henry, Marci's father is God. That's right, the father-in-law I am taking about is God. So many of us have God in the box of "my father" that we forget He is the Father of our spouse as well.

I can't tell you how many times I have seen these "Henrys" in my office. They prayed for God to give them a wife. Then they got married and forgot to take their wife back to God on a regular basis. I mean, some couples haven't prayed together for decades. The husband refuses to go to his wife's true Father, God, on any regular basis. Imagine how God feels; he created her for Henry and then Henry abandons God with his

wife. Oh, Henry might pray by himself, but he doesn't bring the wife home to God, his Father-in-law.

How is this possible to neglect his Father-in-law, God? I think it's easy when we are in America struggling to define what marriage is. My suggestion is that marriage is between God, a man and a woman, marriage is a union of three, not two. As we think about marriage so we believe. If we really believe marriage is a tri-union, then we behave that way. Suppose God really is your husband's dad. Would that impact your daily interactions with your husband? Imagine the all-knowing, all-powerful, almighty God was your wife's father, really. Could that impact the way you treat her in your marriage?

The most important team member you will have is God. He is all-knowing and all-powerful, a creative God who loves you and your spouse. And God is impartial in disputes where you may have different opinions on a matter.

Seek God daily. You can find Him in His Word, the Bible. You can find Him in prayer with your spouse and individually. You can find Him through your pastor or spiritual director, and you can find Him when you just stop and worship Him. Couples who regularly seek God and make marriage a union of three face life's special circumstances much better than those who leave God at the church building.

God is a person; He definitely has feelings for people and standards of behavior for them to practice. If you are a parent, suppose you had two adult children, say two girls. One of your sons-in-law disrespects your daughter, doesn't involve you in their family and personally avoids you. It turns out he really misrepresented who he was when he married your daughter. The other son-in-law really does love your daughter. He treats her and you with respect, he involves you in their lives together, and he seeks out time with you so he can deepen his relationship with you.

Which of these sons-in-law would you favor? Of course, the one who really loves your child. He loves the person you love. When someone loves the person you love, you favor that person. Look over the life of your child. Think about those teachers, coaches, activity leaders and church leaders who loved your children; aren't those people you appreciated and respected?

I know this is true for Lisa and me. We love our children's pastors. We also love the couple who ran the Easter play Hadassah and Jubal took part in each year. Lisa and I find it easy to love those who love our kids.

I believe much of the favor of God in my life exists because of how I love the persons God loves, especially my wife. Am I perfect? No. But I try, and I faithfully bring Lisa to her Father on a daily basis. God knows I love Lisa, but I think He really likes our "visiting" Him together.

If you are not sensing God's love and favor, it may be because you've grown estranged from your Father. As part of living the 10-Minute Marriage Principle, you may need to choose exercises that develop you spiritually as a couple.

You can be creative on how you involve God in your marriage. He definitely likes to be involved in marriage. So you and your spouse might want to brainstorm on how you can regularly add God to your marriage. {eoa}

Doug Weiss, Ph.D., is a nationally known author, speaker and licensed psychologist. He is the executive director of Heart to Heart Counseling Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and the author of several books including, *The Ten Minute Marriage Principle*. You may contact Dr. Weiss via his website, or on his Facebook, by phone at 719-278-3708 or through email at heart2heart@.