

Scripture: I Corinthians 7:10-16

Pastor Wayne

Memory Verse: I Peter 3:1 Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.

I often have women come to me and ask me to pray for their husband to get saved so that he will be a better husband. My answer to them is “No!” Don’t get me wrong, I will gladly pray for her husband to get saved, but not to be a better husband I will pray for him because he is going to hell without Jesus Christ as his Savior. She is asking for the right thing for the wrong reasons. James 4:3 puts it this way; “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.” Maybe the reason God is not answering your prayers is because you are praying with the wrong motivation in your heart.

When I ask couples why they have come to me for counseling in their marriage the standard answers are: “We want to be happy.” “I want my spouse to change.” “I’m tired of fighting all of the time. I can’t live this way any longer.” These are all good motivators, but they are not reasons to change, nor will they result in lasting change. We have to be motivated by God! We must have a greater desire to be Holy than to be happy. We should care more about being the kind of person that God wants us to be than the kind of person that our spouse is being. I have to be willing to change, hoping that my spouse will change, but knowing that I must change no matter what they do because it is right according to God’s Word.

I have often said that “God will either change your situation, or God will change you!” Stop praying for God to change your spouse and start praying for God to change you. Don’t only ask God to take away your circumstances, but ask Him for “grace (that) is sufficient for thee” (II Corinthians 12:9). Practice the teachings of Christ in Matthew 5:43-44, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” Your spouse is your closest neighbor and despite how bad things are in your marriage, they are not your enemy! Stop focusing all of your prayers on yourself and what you need, and start praying more for your spouse and what they need.

I know that all of this is easier said than done. Many couples are tired, frustrated, and have all but given up. I want you to know that I sympathize with you. I want you to be happy. I am praying that your spouse will change and become the wife or the husband you need and want. I don’t want you to live the way you have been any longer. I don’t have a magic wand to fix your spouse or to change your circumstances, but I can tell you this; if nothing changes, nothing is going to change. The only one that you have the power to change is you. Let God work in your life. Begin the process of change and see how God begins to change the people and circumstances around you and most importantly how He changes you!

Meditation: In what ways do I need to change in relation to God and my marriage? How can I pray more effectively for my spouse with better motivation?

Assignment: Pray for your spouse every day. Pray for God to bless them, meet their needs, and to show you how you can be a blessing to them.

Just for Fun: Tell your spouse five reasons why you would be “pleased to dwell with” them (I Corinthians 7:12-13) Be very positive and upbeat and even add a little fun.

Scripture: Psalm 78:38-42

Pastor Ensener

Memory verse: Psalm 78:39

I've always liked the story of the 3 old widows who were sisters that lived together. One sister got up to go to bed, half way up the stairs she stopped and asked "Was I going up or Was I coming down?" The second sister replied with a hint of aggravation, "You were going up to bed!" The third sister headed into the kitchen to make herself a sandwich. Once in the kitchen, she hollered back to the second sister who was still down stairs, "What did I come in here for?" The second sister responded again with a trace of irritation, "You went in to make yourself a sandwich!" After which she said; "I'm so glad I am not as forgetful as the both of you are," as she knocked on the end table. As soon as she finished knocking, she got up, walked over to the door and said "Who is it?"

The truth is, we are all guilty of being forgetful. For a child, it is forgetting to take out the trash. For a distracted teenager, it is forgetting to do his homework. For a husband, it is forgetting that today marks their anniversary. We all struggle with forgetfulness.

In our Scripture today, the Israelites have already forgotten what God had done for them. They forgot about the blessings they received and the many times God delivered them from their enemies.

How many times do we forget about the blessings of God? How many times do we forget God in general? We wake up, go to work, and forget about God. The horrible feeling of being forgotten is something that we don't want; yet so many times we forget God.

As often as we forget about God, we also forget about our spouse. We forget about the vows we made the day we got married and even forget the day we got married. We forget all the blessings of being married and then we start to focus on all the negatives, the little things that start to irritate us.

"But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not... For he remembered that they were but flesh..." Praise the Lord for His grace and His love. It amazes me that He would forgive me even when I forget what I am supposed to do for Him.

May you be as gracious to your spouse as God has been so gracious to you.

Meditation for the day: The best way to love your spouse is to meditate on God's love for you.

Assignment: List five things that you want your spouse to remember and why that is important to you. Share your lists and then promise to work harder at remembering.

Just for fun: Make a list of special memories along with where and when it happened. Take turns sharing one piece of the information and see if your spouse will remember the what, where, or when.

Scripture: Psalm 62:1-12

Pastor Wayne

Memory Verse: Psalm 62:5 My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation *is* from him.

Great Expectations is the title of a novel written by Charles Dickens in 1860. It is also a good way to describe how most marriages start out. Like most of you, I got married expecting that everything would be perfect, that my wife would always meet my needs, that we would have wonderful sex every day, she would have a 5 star dinner cooked every night, and that life would be perfect. She expected me to never leave a mess, always be ready to talk with her about anything at any time, eat everything she put in front of me with a smile, happily spend hours shopping with her, and take out the garbage without being asked. Needless to say reality fell far short of expectations!

Most problems in marriage are due to unmet expectations. You cannot resolve your problems until you release most of your expectations. There are four different types of expectations that have to be dealt with:

- **Unspoken Expectations:** A lot of couples assume that they are on the same page until a problem arises and they find out otherwise. Your spouse cannot do what they don't know that you want them to do. It is not fair to expect that your spouse should know what you want or that they should want the same thing you want. Voice your expectations. Communicate your needs & wants with your spouse.
- **Unclear Expectations:** Everyone communicates differently. When a couple thinks they have communicated expectations, but they didn't use language that their partner could understand, there will be problems in the relationship. No matter how clear you think you have been, communication doesn't happen until the other person understands.
- **Unmet Expectations:** Even when a couple has clearly communicated their expectations to each other and their partner has understood the need that was expressed, that doesn't always mean it is going to happen. This is the most difficult problem to deal with because "They know what I need and they didn't do it!" Both partners need to be careful to fulfill expectations or to communicate why they can't and how they are working at it.
- **Unrealistic Expectations:** Some expectations are impossible for your spouse to meet or to be 100% perfect on. Our spouse is not our Savior. They cannot do what only God can do for you. There are also limits on what they can do based on the reality of life and who they are. Be willing to show grace and practice patience with your spouse concerning your expectations.

The one thing that you can expect is that your spouse will not always do what you expect. Great marriages are built on the expectation of lots of grace and forgiveness!

Meditation for the day: What can we expect from God in our life and marriage? Have you communicated your expectations to Him?

Assignment: Sit down and talk about your expectations and which category they fit in. Choose one of your spouse's expectations and make it your goal to fill it this week.

Just for fun: Do something unexpected! Think about something your spouse would like but doesn't expect you to do and do it for them.

Scripture: Malachi 1:1-5

Memory verse: Ephesians 5:25 "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;"

During the 17th century, Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England, sentenced a soldier to be shot for his crimes. The execution was to take place at the ringing of the evening curfew bell. However, the bell did not sound. The soldier's fiancé had climbed into the belfry and clung to the great clapper of the bell to prevent it from striking. When she was summoned by Cromwell to account for her actions, she wept as she showed him her bruised and bleeding hands. Cromwell's heart was touched and he said, "Your lover shall live because of your sacrifice. Curfew shall not ring tonight!"

Love is best caught when it is put into action. You can say the words "I love you" one hundred times a day to your spouse and your spouse may not feel loved despite your words. I have been guilty of this. I know I have been guilty because of the response that my wife gives me when I tell her I love her. You know, the automatic-emotionless "I love you" response your spouse gives you? I understand that not every response has to be full of excitement, but when the response is always the same, then there might be a problem there. In order for your spouse to feel loved, you have to put your love into action.

What a difference action makes. I recall after a meal, allowing my wife to relax on our couch while I cleaned up the kitchen. After I finished washing the dishes and putting away our leftovers, I went to sit down next to her. The words she spoke next are what made me realize the difference between an "I love you" in word and an "I-love-you" in deed.

In our passage today, the children of Israel had doubted God's love. Over and over again, God proved His love toward His people, and yet they still doubted. As God is confirming His love for them, they immediately answer back with a question, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" 400 years after the Book of Malachi, God still proved His love. He proved His love on Calvary, for all to see.

Have you proven your love towards your spouse by your actions? Are you faithful to act in love towards them whether they reciprocate or not? Unconditional love is shown by our actions toward our spouse.

Meditation: Unconditional love requires action, even if the feeling is not there. What actions of love do you need to do?

Assignment: Write down 5 specific actions that you can do to show your spouse you love them. Do not show the list to each other until after you have done all five!

Just for fun: Each of you hide ten notes around the house (have blue and red notes to distinguish). Be creative in hiding them, but the ultimate goal is to find them. Each note will have a reason why you love your spouse. Then you go and find your respective notes. First one to find all ten wins.

Scripture: Genesis 2:19-25

Pastor Wayne

Memory Verse: Amos 3:3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

Just because you have been united in marriage doesn't mean that you have unity in your marriage. You can a dog's tail to a cat's tail and even though they are united, I can guarantee you that there will be no unity in that relationship! You can unite a man and a woman together with legal papers and matrimonial knots, but that does not guarantee unity either.

One of my favorite games to watch at our church picnics is the three-legged race. It is fun to watch the couples that keep falling down because they cannot find a way to coordinate and to cooperate. It may be funny to watch couples fall down at a picnic, but there is nothing funny about couples who keep falling down in their marriage. Many couples have not learned how to coordinate and cooperate together.

To coordinate, there must be order. You have to decide on which direction you are going. Many couples have different goals for their marriage. The husband is trying to go one way and the wife is going another. You don't have to be 180 degrees apart in your goals to fail. You can only get to your goals if you are in agreement as to what those goals are; whether they e financial goals, goals for your children, goals for your future, or whatever they might be.

You also need to have some kind of order to your effort. The winning couples in the three-legged race are the ones who communicate with each other and decide what they are going to do and how they are going to do it. "Let's start with our outside foot." I'll call a cadence – odd numbers for middle foot, even numbers for outside foot." However you do it, you have to know where you are going and how you are going to get there together.

Knowing your goal and having a plan is great, but you still have to figure out how two people can do it together. What makes the three-legged race hard is that one of you is using your left leg and the other is using your right leg. These are opposites and you can have a tough time working together. They are controlled by two different brains and work the exact opposite from each other.

Marriage is two brains learning how to think as one. The problem is we don't think alike. My wife thinks like a woman (because she is one 😊) and I think like a man because I are one 😊! The only way we can have one mind is in Christ (Philippians 2:5) Not only that, she doesn't walk like me, her leg is shorter than mine, and I am faster than her. One or both of us have to make some adjustments if we are going to finish the race without falling down! The interesting thing is that I am probably going to have to adjust more than her because she is "the weaker vessel" (I Peter 3:7).

Meditation: How can I create better unity with God and with my spouse?

Assignment: Sit down together and write down your goals as a couple.

Just for Fun: Have your own three-legged race. See how well you do as a team. To make it more fun, do it in front of the kids having them cheer you on or do it naked (alone in your house of course!