

Love with Intimacy!

1 Corinthians 7:5-7

For some, the longer they have been married the more they feel like they are in a Paul Simon song:

“Slip slidin’ away slip slidin’ away, you know the nearer your destination the more you’re slip slidin’ away.”

How does this happen? How do couples married for 2-3 decades, raise children together, hit every one of life’s bumps yet end up alienated from one another?

Here is one way it happens: Mom’s give birth to something that is indescribable, a little precious baby, a minime. And one look into that precious face and there is nothing that mom won’t do for that little one. Just what a mom is supposed to do right?

Dad looks into that precious face and he knows and feels that obligation to make sure that he provides for every need that little one will ever have. Not only that, but since dad is a hard worker he is going to give that child everything to succeed and beyond. Just what a dad is supposed to do right?

What if I told you that both mom and dad just sabotaged that child and their relationship. Would you believe me? The truth is that is exactly what happened.

Catch this: the greatest thing you can do for your children is to be an example of love. This will teach your kids to love and trust Jesus. And one of the best ways to be an example of love, possibly the best example, is how we as husband and wife love one another.

Did you catch that? Do you believe it?

What type of example do we set men, if we don’t love our wives for our children? Will they know how to love their spouse if we don’t set that example?

What type of example do we set ladies, if we don’t put our husbands first for our children? Will they then get into a relationship in which they don’t put their spouse first?

One thing a terrible marriage does for our children, it sets them up for the same mistakes. You see, for us to equip them to have a loving, fulfilling relationship we must have one ourselves.

So, how do we do that? Now, some of you may be thinking, 'my kids are fully grown, too late.'

It's never too late to become a great example for our kids. A matter of fact, if we have been blowing it and we let God change us that change has the power to not only help your relationship, but it has the power and opportunity to change every relationship around you.

Listen to this, it isn't too late! No matter how long you have been married, no matter how badly you have blown it God can fix it! Just work with Him.

Not sold yet? Here are a few reasons to put your spouse first:

1. Your kids need an example of what a loving marriage looks like.

They need to see you doing it right. They see you every day and no one else has that opportunity to live out this example for them. They need this more than they need the latest video game, designer jeans or latest hot list items. They need your example.

2. When your kids take the number 1 spot it develops in them a self-centered entitlement.

In the old days we called this spoiling the child. When we teach them that the world revolves around them and when they go out into that world that image quickly crashes.

Our kids need to know that the world doesn't revolve around them. When they know this, it's truth can't knock them off their feet.

3. When your marriage is going well, everything is going well.

Well, even if everything isn't going well you have a relationship that supports you through life's storms. Home is a refuge, not a place behind enemy lines.

4. By putting each other first it preserves romance and intimacy in the marriage.

When I say putting the other first this is what I mean.

Men, your single responsibility can be wrapped up in one word: love. If your wife knows and I mean knows that she is loved unconditionally, wholeheartedly by you your mission is accomplished.

We talked about that on Mother's Day, didn't we?

Ladies, your single responsibility can be wrapped up in one word also, and that word is: respect. If you make your man know and I mean know that he is respected, unconditionally and wholeheartedly you have fulfilled your mission as a wife.

Every marriage that has come to me for counseling has allowed their love/respect cycle to stop. The man gets frustrated and stops showing his wife he loves her. The woman gets frustrated and stops showing her husband she respects him. The cycle comes to a dead halt.

(Explain how to get the cycle going again.)

OK, we got the cycle going again, but why is romance and intimacy so important? Let's take a look:

Song of Solomon 4:1-5, "How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes behind your veil are doves. Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from the hills of Gilead.

2 Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn, coming up from the washing. Each has its twin; not one of them is alone. 3 Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon; your mouth is lovely. Your temples behind your veil are like the halves of a pomegranate.

4 Your neck is like the tower of David, built with courses of stone; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors. 5 Your breasts are like two fawns, like twin fawns of a gazelle that browse among the lilies."

Some of you seem to be getting a little uncomfortable, but wait, he's not finished:

Song of Solomon 7:7-9a, "Your stature is like that of the palm, and your breasts like clusters of fruit. 8 I said, "I will climb the palm tree; I will take hold of its fruit."

May your breasts be like clusters of grapes on the vine, the fragrance of your breath like apples, 9 and your mouth like the best wine."

Do you think they enjoyed each other?

Why did God say after creating Adam? Something like it isn't good for man to be alone. So, he created Eve. God intended that we delight in each other, that is why He put the parts together in the way He did. God did that, He created us in a way that living in His will would bring delight to each other.

Not yet convinced? Check this out:

1 Corinthians 7:5, “Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

You see, the world has messed up the sexual intimacy which God created. For some it has been weaponized in the relationship, used as some kind of bargaining chip. For others it has become their identity, putting Christ in a distant second.

The preservation of intimacy in marriage needs to be a priority. This is part of how we love and respect our partner.

Let me interject at this point that God created sex to be between a man and a woman who have committed to one another in the bonds of marriage. If I love someone, I won't lead them into sin and if I respect someone I won't treat them as something for my own personal satisfaction.

Pop quiz time:

When was the last time you held hands? If you don't remember, you don't get a point.

When was the last time you kissed? If you don't remember, deduct 1 point.

When was the last time you, well, ahhh, you know. If you don't remember...I guess grandma was right, it does make you dumb.

How you can preserve intimacy:

1. It must remain a priority.

Hugs and kisses must be a daily thing. Hold hands, touch one another in gentle meaningful ways. Don't get too busy.

The weight of the world may be pouring down on you, but one simple hug can shed it all off. That is what we can do for each other.

2. Cultivate positive emotional vulnerability.

Practice good conversation rules. This includes listening to one another. Set aside time to talk. It might be included in a weekly date night, but you have to plan it.

Share your fears, dreams, concerns, passions. Know each other.

3. Keep it fun and fresh.

Do fun things together and encourage individual dreams and build shared ones.

This doesn't mean you do everything together. Remember, I love ultra running, Barb gives me space to do that, but we as a couple need to have things we do together.

4. Oh boy...Keep your sex life new.

Don't let it get in a rut...now, some may simply think being in a rut would be a step up.

God is a God of creativity and humanity is His greatest work, explore it.

Now, as Forest Gump would say, "That's all I got to say about that."

5. Get a tune up.

Just like a car needs a lube and oil job, your marriage needs periodic maintenance. (Stick with me...)

Here are 3 things you can do:

First, go through the next Re-engage class. This will help you find the weaknesses of your marriage and give you tools to work on them. I found it really helpful for my conversations with Barb.

Second, go on a Weekend to Remember. It's a weekend to focus on the relationship and as many can attest, it really opens up your lines of communication and can remind you of why you first fell in love.

Third, take a love like you mean it cruise. Because, well, who doesn't like a cruise.

The key is to put some effort into your relationship.

It may need some counseling. Counseling is a good thing. Actually, every marriage could use the input of a skilled counselor. So, get over the stigma of thinking we have to have it all together all by ourselves. That is pride and pride comes before a fall. So, humble yourself and reach out for help.