

Peacemaking for Families

by Ken Sande

Lesson 22 – Insurance Policies for a Healthy Marriage

One essential thing for any marriage is the knowledge that the relationship with the kids is secondary to the husband-wife relationship. It has to be more than mere knowledge, however. It has to be applied each and every day. Many marriages begin their downward spiral once the intimacy that was once shared by the husband and wife is now transferred to the children. Yes, there will be changes once children arrive. Yes, the children will receive a significant portion of the time and energy of a parent. Yes, adjustments will need to be made. But, the most important earthly relationship – that between a husband and wife – must remain the top priority. If it does not there will be a long list of unintended consequences, many of which are not even thought of at the time.

The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.

Proverbs 27:12

On your wedding day you probably recited, in the presence of witnesses, vows similar to these:

"In the name of God, I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wife/husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death. This is my solemn vow."

What do those words mean to you when you hear them now? Are they merely words, a formality that went along with a wedding ceremony, or are they solemn promises you made as an unbreakable covenant to keep?

Preventative Action Steps for a Lifelong Healthy Marriage

1. **Nurture** _____ the **Marital** _____ Relationship - If a marriage is not deliberately nurtured, it will seldom grow and will often deteriorate. As the saying goes, "If you're coasting, you must be going downhill."

It is essential that a couple deliberately cultivate the four key dimensions of their marital relationship:

- **Spiritual** _____. Two people who draw closer to God will inevitably grow closer to each other. Commit to grow in faith through joint prayer, study of God's Word, corporate worship, and fellowship.
- **Intellectual/Recreational** _____. Commit to mutually enjoying as many relationship-building activities as possible: reading, continuing

education, hobbies, entertainment, recreation, sports, travel, etc. Doing such activities together enables you to engage each other, share questions and insights, and grow in the same direction.

- **Emotional** _____. Showing signs of affection, concern, and devotion through words and actions; communicating openly, gently, honestly, and in a way that is sensitive to your spouse's communication style - these are only some of the ways a husband and wife can nurture the emotional bond between them. Especially important in avoiding estrangement and maintaining emotional intimacy are confession and forgiveness - both emotional experiences (although they are more than just that).
- **Physical** _____. The sexual relationship extends beyond the bedroom, but definitely includes that, can be sustained by other displays of affection such as tender touches, hugs, and hand-holding. Physical passion unites a couple, and need not wane over time; in fact, it can grow steadily if they are willing to keep growing together.

This was, of course, not an exhaustive list. It was meant as a starter kit. For practical guidance on how to nurture your marriage, see:

- *Complete Marriage and Family Home Reference Guide*, by Dr. James Dobson.
- *Moments Together for Couples*, by Dennis and Barbara Rainey.
- *Intimate Issues: Conversations Woman to Woman*, by Linda Dillow and Lorraine Pintus.

2. Learn to Be Peacemakers

As we have seen throughout our study this year on this topic, our flesh guarantees conflict within a marriage, no matter how much the individual spouses are committed to each other. It's how spouses handle these conflicts that is crucial. If we do not learn how to resolve our differences constructively, the repeated offense of daily life will accumulate to critical mass and will create a wall that divides or permanently separates us from our spouse.

One great way to practice these principles is to share them with others. Anyone who has taught a class of any sort - be it from the Bible or in another subject - invariably grows in knowledge of the subject he or she is teaching. If you have children, a good place to start would be by teaching *The Young Peacemaker* to your own children. Even if you don't have children you could begin by teaching it through your own behavior with your co-workers, friends, family members, etc.