

John the Baptist (1)

David Halbrook

Luke 1 records the unusual events preceding the birth of John, but for now, focus on his adulthood. He began to preach when *the word of God came to John . . . in the wilderness* telling him to *prepare the way of the LORD* by declaring *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, indicating that the words of the prophets were soon to be seen (Lk. 3:2-3; Dan. 2:44). This meant reminding the people of their sin and baptizing all who repented, *for the remission of sins* (Lk. 3:3). Sin was not a popular topic so many people hated his controversial preaching, which Jesus praised (Mt. 11:11ff).

John was arrested, and later murdered, for opposing sinful marriage (Mk. 6:14-29). In prison, he became discouraged and began to wonder whether Jesus really was the One the prophets said was coming (Mt. 11:2-3). Jesus reassured John of the reality and certainty of His power and message.

As John predicted, Jesus was more prominent than he. Later, people who sincerely preached or practiced John's message were shown *the way of God more accurately* (Acts 18:24-28). Even John's baptism was replaced by the baptism of Jesus (Acts 19:1-5). (read more next week or at our website)

-- Our article appearing in *Arkansas Weekly*.

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for these among us: Ed & Janice White, John & Erlene Ledgerwood, Novela Puckett, Noleka Hopper, Joyce Ratliff, Ed Koettel, Maxine Epperson, others with ongoing trials, new Christians. (Also, Ben Calderon with whom we fellowship [share] in Conway). [See the overhead charts for other prayer requests]

Check the lists on the bulletin board at the back from time to time (Lord's Supper preparation, roadside sign, men leading when we assemble).

Join us each Sunday at 10AM (classes), 10:45AM, & 5PM and Wednesday at 7PM.

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*
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Attitudes That Sweeten Marriage

Donald Townsley

Is your marriage as happy as you want it to be? Many marriages today are in trouble and the mates are unhappy. One million divorces are granted in this country every year. Fifty-four percent of married women admit they have committed adultery, and the percentage of men who have committed adultery is higher than the women! This unfaithfulness to the marriage bed shows that many marriages are not what God intended them to be. God never intended that marriage be an unhappy state, but for it to be one of the happiest relationships that man would have on this earth (Prov. 5:18-19). When a marriage is in trouble and the companions are unhappy, someone is breaking the laws of God.

THE HUSBAND/ WIFE RELATIONSHIP God created the man and said it was not good for him to be alone, so made an help meet for him -- woman (Gen. 2:18; 2:21-22; I Cor. 11:9). God then instituted the marriage relationship (Gen. 2:24). The institution of marriage is a divine, monogamous, and life-long relationship of oneness (Matt. 19:4-6; Rom. 7:3-4). God said by the prophet Malachi that "He hateth putting away" (Mal. 2:16). Jesus said that there is only one reason for "putting away" and marrying again, and that reason is fornication (Matt. 19:9). Only the innocent party has the reason.

God ordained that the man should rule over his wife (Gen. 3:16), not unjustly as a slave, but he is to rule her with love (Eph. 5:25, 28-29). This is to be a self-giving concern for her person -- a love that seeks her happiness and well-being at the sacrifice of his own interest and welfare (I Cor. 13:5). The wife is to reverence and submit to her husband (Eph. 5:24, 33; I Pet. 3:1) and to love him (Tit. 2:4).

In the marriage relationship the husband and wife become exclusively the possession of each other (I Cor. 7:2-5). Marriage fulfills one of the greatest needs of mankind -- to love and to be loved. This relationship brings into the life of each mate

fulfillment, satisfaction, and contentment. A fruitful marriage is built upon love, respect, faithfulness, and mutual consideration.

Let us now look at some attitudes that build each other up instead of tearing each other down -- some attitudes that will sweeten marriage:

EXPRESS APPRECIATION TO YOUR COMPANION Express appreciation for things that are done -- whether they be big or small. At all times look for the good qualities in your mate and express appreciation for them. Don't just look for the negative, if you do all of life will begin to appear totally negative! If you are to stay in touch with the reality of the good in your companion, you must look for good and express appreciation for it.

GIVE HONOR AND RESPECT TO YOUR COMPANION Peter said to the husbands, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (I Pet. 3:7). Paul said to the wives, "And the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Eph. 5:22). Respect breeds respect, so if a wife wants respect she must show respect. Disrespect inflames bad feelings. Treat you mate with respect and dignity and your mate will want to rise to the same high level.

BE FORGIVING An unforgiving attitude inflames tension and strive. Never have the habit of dredging up the past mistakes to put down your companion. That is being unmerciful and unforgiving, and it reopens old wounds. Everyone wants mercy and forgiveness for his (or her) shortcomings. Many times people forgive everybody but their mates, but the first place forgiveness should be practiced is at home with one's mate (Luke 6:36-38; Matt. 6:14-15; Col. 3:13; Eph. 4:33). You and your mate are imperfect human beings (I John 1:8), so when you are wrong why not simply say, "I am wrong and I'm sorry"? Only an immature and prideful person refuses to admit his shortcomings and sins.

BE HELPFUL AND CONSTRUCTIVE Companions should be able to talk honestly with each other, and to treat each other as best friends (and they should be best friends). You want your feelings, needs and opinions to be heard and considered -- so does your companion.

What does it mean to be a friend? Friendship is a privilege, not a situation to be taken advantage of. When a person takes advantage of another there is no friendship, so, no loving companion will take advantage of his mate.

Friends love each other dearly, so do mates who are trying to do God's will. A friend offers his best to a friend -- husbands and wives who are what they ought to be offer their best to each other. A friend will go when needed. So will a true and faithful companion. A friend is a holder of confidences; if there is one person on earth on should be able to trust, it is his mate. A friend will have empathy for another; if there were ever two people who should feel each pain of the other it should be companions. A friend will do all he can for another -- loving mates cannot do enough for each other.

MARRIAGE PARTNERS ARE A TEAM A healthy, loving husband/wife relationship is not a master/slave relationship. It is a sharing, complimenting relationship where each mate recognizes the God-ordained role of each. When each mate realizes they need help and that they do complement each other, they draw closer and grow to respect and love each other more.

GOD'S LAWS OF MARRIAGE MUST BE RESPECTED Break any of God's laws, and they will break and destroy you! Millions are paying painful mental, emotional, and physical penalties for rejecting and transgressing God's laws on sex and marriage -- and most of these will pay eternally with their souls lost in hell! God's law is plain -- "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Rom. 13:9), and the penalty for breaking this law is always enforced! Let us look at the penalty:

1. Remorse (Prov. 5:11; Psa. 51:3).
2. Disease of the body (Prov. 5:11; Rom. 1:27).
3. Dishonor (Prov. 6:33)
4. Impoverishment (Prov. 5:10).
5. Spiritual death (Prov. 6:32; Rom. 6:23).
6. The only grounds for divorce (Matt. 19:9).
7. The Lord will avenge (I Thess. 4:6).

If we who are married will only practice the things we have stated in this article, it will bring sweetness to the marriage relationship.

"My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (1 Jn. 3:18). It's certainly not wrong to express our love for family, friends, our brethren, and even our fellow man with our words. However, real love for another is quite visible in how we treat them. God expects Christians to demonstrate their love by their actions. Let's keep this in mind as we go about our week - to love others in deed and in truth. What an impact we would have upon this world if all of God's children would do so!

(Jesse Flowers, *Monday Morning Meditations*, 12-8-14)