

## Pastor's Corner – 7-28-2018

### Making Marriage Work: Principle 3 – Turn toward Each Other Instead of Away

Television, movies, and books have shaped our conception of romance. Based on these sources, most of us consider romance to be a thing of grand gestures, dramatic encounters, and exotic locations. The climax of almost every romantic comedy is when the guy (or gal) goes to some great length to win the love and affection of the person they are “meant to be with.”

Of course, real romance doesn't look anything like what is portrayed in the movies. Real romance is built on the everyday, hum drum, normal interactions between a husband and wife. The third principle for making marriage work is that couples should learn to turn toward each other instead of away. What this means is that the two become partners and support one another. They take an “us vs the world” mentality. The strength of this principle can often be observed in those simple, every day, interactions. Let's imagine a couple is making dinner together. During this mundane activity, the healthy couple will have a bit of conversation going on. It probably isn't profound. It may be as simple as just getting caught up with what happened in each other's day. But there's some interaction going on. By contrast, the unhealthy couple will probably work in silence. If one partner says something they will receive a grunt or silence in response.

One way to think about this principle is to imagine that you have an emotional bank account with your spouse. Any time you do something thoughtful or considerate for your spouse you make a deposit. If your account is in the black you will be much more likely to breeze through life's challenges.

So, for example, if a husband goes and washes his wife's car, that's a deposit. If he listens to her share about her day without criticizing, offering advice, or tuning out – that's a deposit. When a wife goes to Lowes with her husband and wanders around looking at tools for an hour, that's a deposit. It's also a deposit when she puts her phone away when the two of you go out to eat and she isn't distracted by other things.

In every interaction we have the opportunity to turn toward the other person (engage in the conversation, ask questions, show interest) or turn away (ignore, criticize). Healthy marriages are built when we practice turning toward rather than away.

If you want to practice this principle a great way to do it is to have a daily “stress reducing conversation.” This is a conversation you have with your spouse at the end of your day where you can unload all your *non marital* stress while your partner listens encouragingly.

Let's say you both get home from a long day at work. After settling into the home routine you begin your stress reducing conversation. One partner starts and has 15 minutes to share about their day. After those 15 minutes you switch. In order for the conversation to be beneficial there are a few rules to follow.

1. **Don't give unsolicited advice.** This is a special temptation for guys because we have a tendency to want to fix things. So when your spouse shares her struggles don't jump in and try to fix it (unless she specifically asks for your advice). More often than not, our wives just want us to be a listening ear. So offer hugs instead of advice.
2. **Show genuine interest.** Don't let your mind or eyes wander. Stay focused on your spouse. Ask questions, nod, say “uh-huh.”
3. **Communicate your understanding.** Let your spouse know that you empathize. Validate their feelings.
4. **Take your spouse's side.** This one is super important. This means being supportive even if you think your spouse's perspective is unreasonable. The stress reducing conversation isn't the time to try and correct your spouse but rather a time to say, “You poor baby! That was totally unfair! What a jerk that person was, I can't believe they said that to you!”
5. **Express a “we against others” attitude.** The two of you are in it together. Us vs. the world. Always take your spouse's side.

6. **Express Affection.** Hugs are good.

It takes time to make significant deposits into the love bank and most of those deposits will come from mundane, every day kinds of interactions. So if you want to rekindle the romance and build a strong foundation to your marriage, make a point of turning toward each other as often as possible.

Happy Sabbath

Pastor Tyler