

Setting Your Marriage On A Biblical Path

INTRODUCTION

A

This manual has been designed to be used with a couple, who has been brought alongside you to encourage your walk with the Lord and with each other. You will be given biblical principles so that you can grow in obedience to God's Word. Your Creator has designed commands to teach *you* how to become a godly spouse, regardless of what your mate is doing or not doing.

It is wise to approach these studies and exercises in faith with the attitude of, "Lord, please take the log out of my own eye rather than focusing on the speck in my spouse's eye." Pray that your blind spots will be revealed to you. (Matt. 7:1-5) Make these verses your prayer:

**“ Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.”**
Ps. 139:23,24

God has designed your spouse just for you! Gary Thomas in his book, *Sacred Marriage*, poses the question, "What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy?"

As you embark on this journey with Jesus, keep the truth before you that God has permitted your difficult situation to teach you to become more like Him as you *learn* how to love, to be patient, to have compassion and to be committed and faithful in relationship to Him and to each other.

**“ Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another;
be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.
Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult,
but with blessing, because to this you were called
so that you may inherit a blessing.
For, whoever would love life and see good days must keep
his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.
He must turn from evil and do good;
he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord
are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the
face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”**
1 PET. 3:8-12

We all encounter difficult people and difficult circumstances as we move through life. Over time we develop an approach to these problems or pain that we believe will "fix" the problem. The following diagrams reflect the different approaches taken to deal with our problems or pain.

Approach #1 is an attempt to avoid the problem or pain by ignoring it or pretending it does not exist. This person will avoid conflict at all costs and becomes a people-pleaser. He believes if he can keep everyone happy, life will be fine.

Approach #2 sees the problem but goes around and around in the problem. This person attempts to “fix” the problem through control and manipulation. He believes if everyone would do what he thinks they should do, life will be fine.

Approach #3 is a response when approach #1 and #2 fail to bring results. This is an attempt to get out of the pain completely by escaping to something that promises pleasure or relief. This escape usually creates a new problem that is bigger than the first one.

These first three approaches are our attempt to control our world on our own terms with our own resources. Approach #4 addresses the problem directly by turning to God and His resources to persevere through the problem or pain. This person accepts God’s plan in the midst of the pain, knowing that He has an eternal purpose in all things.

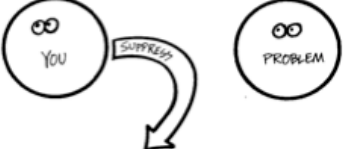
Approach #4 is expanded in the diagram, “Facing Emotional Pain.” When facing a problem, now depicted as fire, our normal response is to protect ourselves from the pain. This path of selfprotection produces many sinful results. This focus on self and our circumstances produces many sinful attitudes and behaviors. Instead, when we turn to God and His resources, we can persevere through the pain. God allows, orchestrates and ordains the painful circumstances of our lives to address the selfishness, self-dependance and self-sufficiency to make us more like Christ. This results in a life that is focused on God and others and produces peace and contentment even in the midst of painful circumstances. It is in the middle of the pain that we experience the grace of God. It is His presence with us through the difficulty that we enjoy intimacy with Him. It is our sovereign, loving God who orchestrates all the events of our lives for our good and His glory.

“ And we know that all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

ROM. 8:28

4 to a PROBLEM

1




SUPPRESS OR IGNORE THE PROBLEM

- withdraw physically or emotionally
- block or fail to face pain
- avoid conflict; please others
- seek comfortable/pleasurable life

I see no problem!!

2

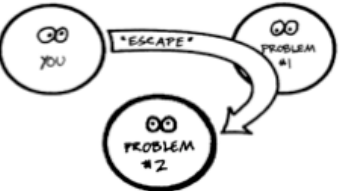


GO AROUND IN THE PROBLEM

- sinfully respond in same way to same problem without solving the problem: control, manipulate, worry, argue, fight, repay evil for evil, convince, demand

I can fix this problem in my own way!!

3




ESCAPE THE PROBLEM

- flee the problem and create other problems: fantasy, divorce, drunkenness, excessive behaviors, irresponsibility

I will escape the pain of this problem!!

4



STRAIGHT THROUGH THE PROBLEM

- biblical approach: solve the problem through a direct hit or experience victory in painful circumstances

I will turn to God to see me through this problem.

FACING ^{EMOTIONAL} PAIN



WRONG DECISION

SELF-PROTECTION

Self-oriented goals
 Self-trust; Unbelief in God
 Pride, Selfishness
 Fear
 Blameshift
 Bitterness, Anger, Self-pity
 Suppression, Denial
 Fantasy
 Superficiality
 Detachment, Busyness
 Manipulation, Control
 Escape
 Hopelessness
 Depression

RESULTS

Focused on self/circumstances
 Bondage to self
 Further frustrations
 Lack of growth
 Sinful attitudes
 Lack of spiritual fruit
 Barren life

RIGHT DECISION

PASSING THROUGH WITH CHRIST

Pursuing God's Goals
 Believing, relying on God
 Obeying His commands
 Trusting His promises
 Hoping in God
 Praying
 Focusing on Scripture
 Fellowshiping
 Thanking
 Yielding; Surrendering
 Accepting
 Praising God

RESULTS

Focused on God/others
 Set free from self
 Peace and joy in painful circumstances
 Maturity
 Christ-like attitudes
 Fruit of the Spirit; Love
 Fruitful life
 Clear conscience