

Relationships: Some assembly required.

Guided Growth with Pastor Keith @ CBC Sunday, Feb 26th

When you buy something of value, you often get an owners manual from the manufacturer. Most warn you that if you don't follow the manual, and often some maintenance schedule, **you'll void the warrantee!** It should come as no surprise that life, (and relationships) comes with a manual (instructions) from the manufacturer. Too often we ignore the instructions and "maintenance", but then wonder why the "guarantee" is voided when it breaks! The results of such negligence are tragic! (See Pr. 14:12) Last week we discovered how Solomon learned this painful lesson too late! Satan still seeks to seduce us to follow him rather than submit to God. (Jn. 10:10) God warns us that failure to comply with His instructions will void the "home warrantee." (Ps. 127:1) No where is this more evident than in Relationships. God repeatedly asks us to trust Him so that He can guide us (Pr. 3:5,6; Ro. 12:1,2) and warns us of the dangers of becoming *"conformed to this world"*. (Ro. 12:1,2) The "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4) comes to *"kill, destroy, steal"* (John 10:10) but Jesus comes to bring *"beauty out of ashes."* (Is. 61:1-3; Luke 4:18) **How do we get from "ashes" to "beauty"?**

- Mt. 18: Jesus Speaks of the power of forgiveness and the blindness of bitterness.
- In Mt. 19: He's confronted with the broken relationships of his day and reminds us of God's design *"from the beginning"* (vs 4-8) To find the path to "beauty" we must understand:

1. The Dilemma of Man.

A. God described Creation as "Good" 10 times! Gen 1:25 *"God saw that it was good."*

Tobe: beautiful, pleasing, precious. (See Eccl. 3:11)

- 1) Creation was Precious and brought Him Pleasure!
- 2) This was why we were created! Rev. 4:11
- 3) This is why Satan hates us!

B. God intentionally created Adam first. 1 Tim.2:13 *"Adam was first formed, then Eve."*

1) Adam had perfect:

- **Position:** He was in charge of the world, crowned with glory and honor. (Ps. 8:6)
- **Possessions:** He had it all! (Gen. 1:26-29)
- **Prosperity:** Perfect health and immortality.

And yet God still said in Gen. 2:18: *"It is not good that the man should be alone;*

2) God created Adam with needs:

- **Physical needs:** Food, Air, Water, Exercise
- **Spiritual needs:** Intimacy with God. (Ecc. 3:11)
- **Soul (Emotional) needs:** Intimacy with others.

C. The Dangers Of This Dilemma (Needs)

- 1) **Self-Sufficiency:** Deny my needs! (or meet my own)
- 2) **Self-Centeredness:** Deify My needs! This often results in Manipulation.
- 3) **Self-Condensation:** Doubt my needs/value.

2. The Design of God Gen . 2:18

A. God Took The Initiative. *"I will make an help meet for him."*

- 1) Adam wasn't qualified to design his own "Help Meet". (Are you?)
- 2) **God Knew What Adam (we) Needed!** "Help meet" aw-zar'; to aid or help.
From 'azar: to surround, protect, aid!
 - a) She was to be a completer, not a "competer."

- b) She was designed “different” from Adam.
- c) Adam had to “Sleep” in order for God to “operate”. (Song of Sol. 2:7, 3:5, 8:4)
We try to direct the “Great Physician” in this delicate surgery!

B. Being a “help meet” is a:

- 1) **Mutual** responsibility. 1 Cor 11:8-12 *God designed us for mutual interdependence!*
- 2) **Primary** responsibility.
1 Cor 7:33 *“he that is married careth ... how he may please his wife.”* (also Eph. 5:25-33; 1 Peter 3:7)
1 Cor 7:34 *“she that is married careth ... how she may please her husband.”* (Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Pt 3:1-6)
(Merimnaō: to take careful thought) Do you “take careful thought” about pleasing your spouse?
- 3) **Sacred** responsibility. Eph. 5:22-33

C. This design elevated creation to “very good”. Gen. 1:31 *“it was very good.”* me’ōd tobe: *exceedingly beautiful, pleasing, precious.*

- 1) God intends Marriage to be precious and bring pleasure to us as well as Him!
Gen. 2:8 *“The Lord God planted a garden ... in Eden”* ‘ēden: Pleasure 2x; Delights 1x; Delicate 1x

D. God Established Relationships To Meet Our Intimacy Needs. (Eccl 4:12)

- 1) Marriage: Gen 2:24 *“joined unto his wife...”*
- 2) Family: Ps. 68:6 *“God setteth the solitary in families:”*
- 3) Church: Eph. 2:19 *“ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens ... of the household of God.”*

3. The Desire of the Devil. Jn. 10:10 *“The thief cometh ... to steal... kill... destroy:”*

A. Satan Attacked The First Marriage (Ge. 3)

- 1) **Division**: Eve was alone before Satan. (See Mt. 12:25) *“brought to desolation”*
- 2) **Deception**: “Yea hath God said?” (Vs. 1-4)
- 3) Temptation: Vs. 5 “ye shall be as god’s knowing (determining) good and evil”
- 4) **Isolation**: Running from God (Vs 6-7)
- 5) **Rationalization**: Blaming each other. (Vs 11-14)

B. Satan Attacked The First Family. Gen. 4

- 1) Sin led to Sibling Rivalry → Jealousy → to Tragedy.
- 2) The Pattern continued. (*Division, Deception, Temptation, Isolation, Rationalization.*)

C. Satan Attacked The First Church Acts 4-6

- 1) External Sources: Persecution. (Acts 4,8)
- 2) Internal Sources: Pride (Acts 5, 1 Cor. 4:6); Prejudice (Acts 6, 1 Cor. 3); Passion (1 Cor. 3,5,6)

Conclusion:

Mankind has a dilemma. (“needy”); God has a design. (*Interdependency leading to Intimacy*) and Satan has a Desire: (*destroy/corrupt God’s design through “independence” of God and others.*)

The path back to paradise was blocked because of Sin! (Gen. 3:24) But God invites us back to a “relational Eden”. Ps. 16:11! This path is blocked only by Satan’s deceptions and our selfishness.

The path from “beauty to ashes” (Is. 61:1-3) Requires: **Humility**: 1 Pt 5:5-6; **Transparency**: Pr 28:13 **Honesty**: Eph. 4:15; and **Charity**! 1 Peter 4:8; 1 Cor. 13:13.

➤ Are you willing to pursue the path of life?

➤ Where are you “stuck”? (*Humility, Transparency, Honesty, Charity*)

“The Thief comes to kill, destroy, steal... I am come that they might have life, and that more abundantly.”

Marriage Miniatures!

A deaf husband and a blind wife are always a happy couple. French Proverb

Keep your eyes wide open before marriage, half shut afterwards.

Marriage is a perpetual test of character.

To marry a woman for her beauty is like buying a house for its paint.

When I was a young man, I vowed never to marry until I found the ideal woman. Well, I found her-but, alas, she was waiting for the ideal man. Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

A good marriage is not one where perfection reigns: it is a relationship where a healthy perspective overlooks a multitude of "unresolvables." James C. Dobson (1936-)

A successful marriage demands a divorce; a divorce from your own self-love. Paul Frost (1938-)

By all means, marry. If you get a good wife, you will become very happy. If you get a bad one, you will become a philosopher. Socrates (470-399 B.C.)

Chains do not hold a marriage together. It is threads, hundreds of tiny threads that sew people together through the years. Simone Signoret (1921-1985)

I'd trade my fortune for just one happy marriage. J. Paul Getty (1892-1976)

Knowing when to say nothing is 50 percent of tact and 90 percent of marriage.

Love is blind, but marriage restores its sight. Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742-1799)

Love is one long sweet dream, and marriage is the alarm clock.

Marriage does not make us better, any more than it makes us worse; it merely intensifies what is already there, for good and for bad. Sydney J. Harris (1917-1986)

Marriage halves our grief's, doubles our joys, and quadruples our expenses.

Marriage resembles a pair of shears, so joined that they cannot be separated; often moving in opposite directions, yet always punishing any one who comes between them. Sydney Smith

Success in marriage is more than finding the right person: it is being the right person. Robert Browning

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To marry a woman for her beauty is like buying a house for its paint.

Try praising your wife even if it does frighten her at first. Billy Sunday (1862-1935)

Recently in the *Wall Street Journal*, Elizabeth Bernstein [wrote an interesting piece](#) about relationships. Her article talked about what really happens in the day-to-day life of a married typical couple and the frustrations that lead to what we commonly call "nagging. Titled, "Meet the Marriage Killer," her report suggested that both partners in a relationship get tired of the vicious cycle of asking for what they want, being ignored and getting angry and having to ask again. Nagging more doesn't help and withdrawing from each other makes the situation worse. Being told what to do makes both partners then feel like children. Funny, I just had a session today with a couple who were complaining about the same thing. I have been a couples therapist for many years, and I see many of them complain every day in my office about what they describe as nagging behaviors that are killing the love they once felt for each other.

Bernstein says that there are certain tips to change the way that couples talk to each other about what they want. I agree. But I look at it from a slightly different perspective. The real reason that nagging happens is twofold. The moment we commit to forever, after the initial "in love" phase of our romance ends, which it does for all of us, we decide we are finally safe with the one person who we can live with for the rest of our life. And yet almost the second that we make that commitment to forever, we regress. We regress to what we know of forever: our parents.

All we know of love and relationships and forever is Mom and Dad. Mom and Dad were supposed to love us unconditionally -- hey, they're our parents and they probably will. But marriage is not unconditional. There are conditions. I can't get away with everything in my marriage that I might have been able to back at home with Mom and Dad. With my husband, there are certain conditions. In fact, now as a Mom I would probably visit my son in prison every day if he, for instance, robbed a bank. But if my husband pulled an armed robbery? Not so much. Marriage is very conditional.

All of us begin at that moment that we commit to regress to the fantasy that our partner will love us unconditionally and yet, interestingly, we don't forgive them unconditionally for their behaviors that we find annoying. Very quickly after marriage our partners begin to show signs that they are not living up to our expectations. And we start to point out the many ways. We begin to parentify our partner: "pick up your socks," "stop driving so fast" or "you are so messy," are examples. Once we start acting like we are the grown up and our partner is the child who doesn't know how to manage their life, then we have gone from being equals to being in a parentified and, by the way a totally desexualized, relationship. I mean who wants to have sex with someone who is nagging them like their mother, right? Or bossing them around like Dad?

The answer might surprise you; it is not necessarily to compromise. No one wins with compromise -- everyone has to give up something. The answer is appreciation. Appreciation is the opposite of disappointment. We always get more of what we appreciate. If we are frustrated that our partner doesn't take the garbage out, but we like that they do the dishes, then tell them. Appreciating that they do the dishes means they are more likely to do the dishes and wipe down the counters as well. If you appreciate that they wipe down the counters and do the dishes they are more likely to sweep the floor too. And frankly, wouldn't you rather live in a relationship where you are each appreciating the other, than one in which you are constantly pointing out the other's faults?

Take a few moments when you are frustrated with your partner to recognize that stress comes from feeling that you have a long list of things "to do" and you may believe that if your partner would just help you get to the bottom of that list you would miraculously feel relaxed and joyful. But you probably will never get to the bottom of your list. There will always be things to do. In our busy lives and busy homes we can always find things we are stressed about. Focus on what works and makes you feel less stressed. Point out how your partner helps when they do, and focus on ways that each of you can bring less stress into each other's lives. Go with your strengths and remember you didn't get married to be great roommates. You got married because you loved each other. Being good roommates takes practice. And kindness.

The problem in marriages is not so much that we nag each other; the problem is that we forget to appreciate what we have. Taking one another for granted means we neglect to say out loud the positive things we notice, the things we love and the parts of our partner that we are grateful to have around. Remembering to mention these things is a habit. Just like getting into the habit of pointing out what's not working, reminding each other what is working takes practice. Remind each other every day what's positive in your relationship. Take the time to say at least three things you appreciate about your partner every day. Especially on days when they forget to take out the garbage. Tammy Nelson PhD.