

answer easy.

If your spouse never wants to “make love”, there has to be a reason. What that reason is must be found out before any sort of corrective action can be taken. Again, communication with and caring concern for both the feelings and wellbeing of the marriage partner are necessary to find out the real reason. It will do absolutely no good to nag and badger a wrong answer from your spouse, and may do irreparable harm, just as mis-diagnosing a disease and treating for the wrong thing can be fatal. It is definitely NOT natural for a person to have no sex-drive at all, and frequently signals some chemical or hormonal imbalance which can be treated either by change of diet, the healing power of God, medication, or an operation.

As important to avoiding a disaster as some of the non- visible things we have just discussed, is to continually build your relationship with your spouse. Just doing the same old things may be enough to keep from getting a divorce, but adding new and pleasurable memories to your marriage will also help to avoid disaster.

Among things you may find enjoyable and which neither spouse’s parents may have ever done might be to try going grocery shopping together. Break the pattern. Try something new. If the guy will open the car door like a gentleman for the gal and treat her like a lady, it will usually make her feel good and give her a little more pride that she has a real man who cares about her. If the two of you will talk over your likes and dislikes and preferences, each may learn something about the other and possibly discover something they really like or enjoy and might never have tried otherwise. Just because your Dad thought going grocery shopping was for sissies, does not make it so! So why not give it a try. “Try it, you might like it.” Additional benefits are that you have decided together on your purchases, so one can not really blame the other if the budget is overspent, the family cook has an idea of what the mate would enjoy eating and probably how to cook it, and the two of you have spent time together sharing in a responsibility and communicating with each other.

An unselfish and giving attitude brings joy and happiness, whether relating to material wealth or to personal relationships and pleasure.

Be confident your marriage is a success. If you are afraid your wife will leave you and are jealous every time you see her notice anyone of the opposite sex, you will be most miserable and make her miserable, too. But if you will be the best you can be and rest

CHAPTER SIX

AVOIDING DISASTER...

IT IS one thing to know why marriages end and quite another to know how to avoid that disaster, even though on the surface it might seem that if you know why marriages end, you avoid doing those things that cause it to end. In a sense that is true, but far too often, the marriage is already headed for disaster before either spouse realizes the danger.

Communicate! Talk things over together. The fact that you have said your vows neither means that you each can read the other's mind nor that the other has no right any more to participate in the decision making process in matters affecting the family unit. Furthermore, failure to tell each other your inner feelings is both cheating yourself and your spouse of a caring response and an enlarged viewpoint. How can you share your heartaches and your goals if you don't talk about it? How can they know if something they are doing irritates you? You may have become one flesh, but you still have separate minds which can only come into agreement if you talk to each other. No matter how strong the feeling of love, it must be nurtured by verbal expressions of love, each telling the other how much you love and care for the other.

“A soft answer turneth away wrath.”

Each needs to recognize that the other may respond differently to any given situation. She may get silent, moody, he may get angry and attack the perceived problem. But remember, you are no longer just you, but a loving, caring partnership that works best united against all outside forces.

He may be unable to verbalize the words, “I love you,” which she needs to hear, but he may want to hold her hand or hug her and look into her eyes and *feel* the love. She needs to realize that that is his way of saying “I love you,” and not begin fussing that, “You don’t love me any more!” Women typically have a different viewpoint than men, and the same happening may be upsetting, depressing or frightening to her and infuriating, painful or even thrilling to him. You need to learn and accept this fact. If he is laughing at something you view as a calamity, he may not be heartless and uncaring, but rather trying to cheer you up in spite of the problem. We all tend to want to worry about things and often “make mountains out of molehills.” His smiling lightheartedness in the situation may be his way of trying to calm you down so you can see that the problem is not really as big as you want to make it.

One of the most common problems in many marriages is the lack of communication. Try to be open, each with the other. If something your spouse does or says bothers you, try to tell him (or her) in a loving, caring and considerate way what it is that bothers you and why and try to come to an understanding about it. If your spouse won't listen, try leaving notes or writing a short letter. (If you write a letter, be careful not to say anything which could later be used to blackmail you. You may *think* your spouse would never do that to you, but believe me, it really can and sometimes does happen when things go sour!)

Outside disasters and traumas as storms or fires or death of a child can either bring a couple together closer or drive them apart depending on how they react toward it and each other. If they unite and attack the problem as outsiders, they get closer, but if one or the other blames the other for the problem and points the finger of accusation at the spouse, it becomes a wedge to drive them apart.

Tom and June lived on the next farm up the road from Ron and Millie. Both couples were about the same age and their farms nearly identical, but when a tornado flattened both and left them with shattered rubble, Ron and Millie began immediately to work together and soon had the house and essential buildings rebuilt and new crops started and they came out of the trauma as a closer, more loving couple.

Tom gave up and began spending his time in the nearby town bar. He didn't want to talk about how to solve the problem with June and blamed her for wanting to live in the country where the children would not be subjected to city school troubles. The same tornado in the same situation that served to unite Ron and Millie into a closer-than-ever team, drove a wedge between Tom and June and before long, they were separated, then divorced. The children she had wanted to protect were deeply hurt as they saw their secure home become one of hate and bitterness.

If you want your marriage to be a success, don't always be quick to defend yourself when your spouse tries to tell you of something in which they wish you would improve. And if your spouse has a fault that bothers you, while it is still just a minor irritant, *tell* him (or her) what it is and what it would take to please you in that area. Each must be willing to receive as well as give *constructive* criticism and try to make changes when necessary to please your spouse.

You never win a battle against your spouse, because you are both

on the same team. There are more than enough outside forces at work to break up your team without you joining yourself to the outside forces against your spouse. If one contracts cancer or other disease, don't refer to it as his or her disease but the disease, consider the disease the enemy and both of you work to overcome it.

If your spouse really is to blame for a problem, instead of pointing an accusing finger and yelling about it, let them know that you love them anyway and the problem is not his, or hers, but belongs to both of you and you will attack it together.

There are many good medical and scientific reasons why it is better for one man and one woman to have sex only with each other in a marriage bond, but apart from being a demonstration of discontent or an inability to overcome temptation, or the errant spouse catching a sexually transmitted disease or the wife becoming pregnant by the person she commits adultery with, the actual act of intercourse does not alter the genital organs of the guilty person nor their ability to return to being a faithful spouse if the innocent spouse is willing to forgive and forget to save what can still be a beautiful and delightful marriage. But the errant spouse must be truly sorry and repentant, which means that, as Jesus expressed it, they "...go and sin no more." (*John 8:4-11*). Continued "affairs" are sure to make trouble and bring disaster as well as being against God's laws.

While it may be true that the "innocent" spouse has not had a sexual relationship with anyone outside the marriage, they may really be the cause of the other partner's infidelity.

"How?" you ask.

Some people have no desire for sex when they have just been arguing with the person who now wants to have sex, "kiss and make up." More so with women than men, the woman needs to know she is truly loved and cared for and not just a "sex object" as is the current expression. But men, too, may find it difficult or, in some cases even impossible, to engage in sex with a woman who has just been telling him how no-good or what a failure he is -- especially if the wife also makes a comparison to someone else, whether as a workman, as a person, or especially as a lover. Another frequent situation (though much less frequent in the 1980's) is that in which, usually for religious reasons, or less often for birth control, or because of actual pain during intercourse one or the other spouse refuses sex except when children are wanted. The other partner feels a need, acts accordingly and is seen as the one in the wrong. The problem is not unsolvable, but neither is the

in the confidence and assurance that she chose you because she loves you and she is your wife because she wants to be, you can be open and trusting and have no fear.

“Jealousy is cruel as the grave,” the scripture says, and that is so true. If you are jealous of your spouse, you will demand to know where she was, who she was talking to or with and your suspicious nature will at the least irritate her and very likely infuriate her, whether she is innocent as a baby or completely guilty.

Practice the habits of caring kindness, forgiveness, acceptance, being flexible, and expressing your love for your spouse when things are going well so it will come naturally when the hard times come, and your spouse will not have to guess at what you are communicating through your reaction to the trauma. Remember that you two have become one in goals and in love each with the other as an individual, and that your union is both ordained and blessed of God as you work together for Him.

Parents, if one is a disciplinarian and the other is a comforter, try to avoid working in opposite directions. You are the *parenting team* to bring up your children and need to work together. Don't let the child with a problem play the comforting parent against the disciplinarian. That is sure to cause trouble. Usually the disciplinarian doesn't get the affection from the child and the comforting one doesn't get the respect.

One final comment. After this edition was already in the hands of the printer, I was reminded of the problems caused when, for any reason, one spouse “cuts-off” the other from conjugal relations (sex) it creates problems. Sometimes this is done from an honest feeling of revulsion caused by some physical, emotional or mental problem for which the withholding person can find no easy answer. If, for example one spouse is always argumentative, complaining, always finding fault with everything the other does, it may be nearly impossible for the other to feel any desire for the act of love called sex with the grouch even though he or she still has strong sexual appetite in general. This, then creates a very strong temptation to be unfaithful.

Another common situation of this type is that in which a Christian spouse, usually the wife, attempts to coerce the other into church attendance or stopping drinking or drug abuse by withholding her body from her husband. I would like to call your attention to what the Apostle Paul says on this subject in 1 Corinthians 7:1 to 6. “Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: it is good for a man not to touch a woman.

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also, the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.”

Please notice how specific Paul is in verse 4: “The wife hath not power of her own body but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.” Many men can read the first half of that verse but want to forget the second. He goes on to explain why: “...that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.” If that was true in Paul’s pre-TV day, surely, with today’s media emphasis on promiscuity, it goes double. The withholding of sex as a tool to achieve some behavior modification is dangerous and will subject your spouse to extreme temptation to be unfaithful, and that not without justification because of the need you are not fulfilling.

Are you glorifying God through your marriage? Do those who see you and your spouse see and feel the love you each have for the other and the Lord and does it make them think of the goodness of God?