

# How To Minister To Your Spouse

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## PREFACE

“I rejoice when I find counseling material based on Biblical principles and presented in a practical manner. Such is the work of Claude Townsend, my brother in Christ. Claude's life is salt and light. His counseling material will not only help the lay persons who read it, but will greatly aid pastors as they train the laity for the work of the ministry, preserving, penetrating and producing Godly lives as these Biblical truths are learned and obeyed.

These counseling tools are effective as they Exalt the Savior, Edify the Saint, and better prepare us for Evangelizing the Sinner. May they serve to ground us and build us up in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that He will receive ALL the glory.”

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## FOREWARD

So many times and in so many instances books on counseling are written by professionals in the fields of psychiatry or psychology or pastoral ministering. It is no exaggeration to avow that these wonderfully gifted and trained experts are filled with wisdom and are born out of vast experience from penetrating observation. We praise God for the ministries of these dedicated and trained leaders who help us in our hours of need and in our times of trouble.

But all of the above is prelude to another avowal. Practically all of the people who are counseled and who come for help and encouragement are lay people. It is not reasonable that a layman would know intimately and experientially the problems of those who live in his own world and who are struggling with like difficulties? This is the fundamental and basic reason why the books published by Claude Townsend of the Lay Counseling Institute are so pertinent and so useful. They are tools that have been beat out on the anvil of actual life and living, the situations and problems we ourselves face in the same context that the counselors themselves have worked through. Looking at the layman through a layman's eyes immediately commends itself as an approach most fraught with the possibilities for real answers and actual solutions.

Claude Townsend is correct when he says that all of us at some time or another are counselors. The question is not, "Do you counsel?" but, "How good a counselor are you?" The purpose of this Lay Counseling Series is to help us to be at our best in speaking words of direction and helpfulness and encouragement to others. There are so many fine things presented in the Series until we have not opportunity in a brief Foreword even to summarize the marvelous contents of the books. Just let it be said and received in all truth that the Christian laymen and laywomen who take time to read these volumes and to incarnate their wisdom in actual practices will be used of God to bless uncounted numbers of people who desperately need our loving prayers and heavenly encouragement.

God bless the eyes that read the books, and God bless the author and people who have made possible the publication of the Series.

W.A. Criswell, Pastor  
First Baptist Church  
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## **How to Minister To Your Spouse**

### **Introduction**

There are many Christian couples who desire a better relationship with each other. God has provided the necessary resources for every husband and wife to develop a deep, satisfying closeness in marriage. The two of you are one in Christ and He wants this to be worked out in experience – spirit, soul, and body.

Why are some marriages filled with routineness, dissatisfaction, irritation, bitterness, tension, etc.? Why is it that all of us have had times when we were unsure how to respond to our spouse in such a way that would make for a better relationship? Is there hope for real solutions that will develop a meaningful harmonious relationship?

There are no shortcuts to a successful marriage. To minister to your spouse is one of the most difficult things that God has ever called upon you to do. There are no few easy steps. The gate is straight and the way is narrow. To minister to your spouse is the greatest challenge that God has ever given you, but it can be done. Truly, it is worth all the efforts and sacrifices required.

Ephesians 4:29 reveals that everything that you do or say should always build up the hearer but never tear one down. Since this refers to all Christians, then it applies to your spouse. Therefore, you must become aware of the fact that God has commanded you to minister grace to your spouse. To minister grace to your spouse you must become a fit vessel for God to work through. For this reason, the first part of this book will deal with the foundation for ministry. The second part will deal with the application of ministry.

The material in this book will aid you in becoming the kind of spouse that God wants you to become, provided you reverently study this material in the conscious presence of our Holy God, with the intent of putting into practice what God teaches you. Since God commanded you to minister grace to your spouse, then it is possible for you to do so.

# **Part 1**

## **FOUNDATION FOR MINISTRY**

### **Chapter 1**

#### **PERFECT PEACE**

The first essential for ministering to your spouse is inner peace. Isaiah 26:3, "You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You." Should you have inner conflict, you would be disqualified to minister grace to your spouse.

Do you know that it is God's will for you to have perfect peace? One word that helps describe peace is rest. Where there is peace, there is rest. When your soul is quiet, you will have no complaint. Inner peace means that you will feel safe with no fear. It means that you will be happy and have a friendly feeling. Romans 1:17, "The way of peace they have not known." God desires that you know the way of peace. God will keep you in perfect peace when you keep your mind on Him.

John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Everyone who has received Jesus has been given peace. You have peace in Christ, but you must learn how this peace must be worked out in experience. You must know that our Lord is your peace.

Ephesians 2: 15 states "having abolished in His flesh the enmity." This means that anything that would cause enmity or conflict between two Christians has been removed. Should you believe there is something between you and your spouse; it is only the figment of the imagination. It is only the lies of the enemy. The middle wall of partition between you and your spouse has been broken down. God has accomplished everything that is necessary to enable you and your spouse to live in peace.

The wrath of God is not against Christians in the same way as it is non-Christians, yet the wrath of God is against Christians when they disobey Him. Romans 1:18 reveals that the wrath of God is against you when there is undealt-with sin in your life. Romans 13:2, "Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves." This reveals that the judgment of God will be against those who resist God's authority. This is an example, but you may apply the principle and see that God's judgment will be against His child when there is any disobedient act.

Verse 5, "Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake." This also reveals that should you be rebellious that the wrath of God would be against you. You must become aware of the fact that when you are disobedient in any manner that you will experience the wrath of God. When you experience the wrath of God you cannot enjoy the blessings of God.

When you experience the wrath of God, you will experience the wrath of God, you will experience inner conflict. This is the discipline of God rather than punishment. As long as there is a controversy between you and God, you will have the wrath of God against you and it will be expressed by inner conflict. Inner conflict is one way God has to let you know that something is wrong and that you must make a change in your convictions.

You find the same principle in Galatians 5:17, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish." As long as you allow the lusts of the flesh to be at work in your life, you will discover that the Spirit of God is contrary to the lusts of the flesh. As long as you have the works of the flesh in your life, the Spirit will lust against it. This causes conflict. You will experience inner conflict as long as the works of the flesh remain in your life. Inner peace will come only when the lusts of the flesh are willed to the cross.

Romans 5:1 reveals that when you are justified by faith you will have peace. This reveals a most important principle. Since peace is the fruit of the Spirit, then to be justified by faith reveals that the wrath of God ceases and the blessings of God commence.

We are told in Mark 9:50, "I have peace one with the other." You are commanded to be at peace with your spouse. Luke 12:51, "I am come to give peace on earth." You must choose to receive this peace.

John 16:33, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace, In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." When you abide in the Lord, you will experience His peace. Inner conflict reveals that you are not abiding in Him. The way to peace is to be spiritually minded.

Your mind must be occupied with spiritual things. Romans 8:6, "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." When you become spiritually minded, you will experience the abundant life, which will also bring perfect peace. God will never allow you to enjoy perfect peace as long as you keep your mind on the things of the world. Romans 10:15 refers to the gospel of peace. Should you have inner conflict, there is good news that you have not yet heard or should you have heard it, you have not yet received it.

God wants you to consider the things which make for peace. Romans 14:19, "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another." This reveals that peace is required before you are able to edify or minister to another. How can you minister peace when you do not have inner peace? There is a close relationship between peace and being able to minister. Romans 14:17, "for the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." The Kingdom of God is God ruling your heart and life. When God rules your heart and life, you will have peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Peace and joy always go together.

God is the source of peace. Romans 15:33 speaks of the God of peace. At this very moment you are either experiencing the wrath of God or the peace of God. I Corinthians 7:15 reveals that God has called us to peace. God is not the author of confusion, but peace. II Corinthians 13:11 teaches that you and your spouse should be of one mind and live in peace. God desires that every married couple live in peace. Should you not be at peace toward your spouse, then you are in trouble with God.

When the Holy Spirit is free to operate in your life, He will produce peace since peace is the fruit of the Spirit. I Thessalonians 5:13, "And be at peace among

yourselves.” It is a disgrace for a Christian couple to live in continuous conflict. James 3:18, “Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” I Timothy 2:2 reveals that God desires that you live a quiet and peaceable life.

John 14:1, “Let not your heart be troubled.” There are many things that seek to disturb your peace. Once you have inner peace, then you must learn how to live before God so He will maintain that inner peace for you. Should your peace be disturbed, it is because you let it. You must become sensitive to the things that have the ability to disturb your peace. The things that your spouse does that you do not like can easily disturb your peace should you allow it. The things that you want your spouse to do that he or she does not do, could easily disturb your peace should you permit it.

You must remember that since your peace came from God, only God can disturb your peace. Since the world nor nothing in the world made a contribution toward your peace, then it has no capacity to disturb your peace. God may allow the things of this world or Satan to disturb your inner peace, but only to reveal a need for change in your life.

When you get into the habit of following the law of the Spirit of Life, the Spirit will consistently point out everything that seeks to disturb your peace. For you to say, "I have inner conflict," would be saying that either God has not made adequate provision for you to have peace or either you have not accepted His provision.

Inner conflict is an indication of the lack of faith in God. Isaiah 26:3, "You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You." For your mind to be engrossed in the things of the world will disturb your peace. It is God who keeps you in perfect peace when you meet His conditions. God does not say that it is possible for you to have peace from time to time, but that He will KEEP you in perfect peace. God has provided for you to have inner peace continuously.

## **Chapter 2**

# **CONSECRATION**

It is essential for you to solve the problem of consecration for you to be able to minister to your spouse. Consecration is one of the most challenging teachings in the Bible. The New Testament speaks of presenting your bodies and the members of your body to God. The Old Testament deals exclusively with the idea of setting one apart for holy service, as we find with Aaron and his family. It is necessary that you understand what the Bible teaches on consecration. Only when you are consecrated to God will you be able to minister to your spouse.

In II Corinthians 5:14, we discover that the love of God constrains. It is amazing what the love of God will motivate one to do. Therefore, love is the basis of consecration. You can consecrate yourself to God only after you have sensed the love of God. You must know in your heart that God is a God of love before you will consecrate your life to Him. You will not have experienced the love of God. Once you see the love of God, consecration will be a natural result. The measure of love expressed toward your spouse reveals the depth of your consecration.

Consecration is also based on the right of ownership. This truth is revealed in I Corinthians 6:19-20, “or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

In Jesus’ day, being bought was clearly understood. At that time there were human slave markets. You could buy a person from the market just as you bought a chicken or a horse. The price of the human individual was determined by the highest bid at the auction. Whoever paid the highest price had absolute authority over the individual.

God uses this concept when he speaks of our ransom. Our Lord gave His life as a ransom to purchase us back to God. Since the Lord Jesus gave up His right to

His life for your life, then He expects you to give up your right to your life for Him. You are no longer your own because you belong to the Lord.

You not only choose to serve Him for love's sake, but also by right, since you are not your own. When a slave was bought from the market, he immediately began to follow his new master. Therefore, you must follow your new master. Because of the life of redemption, you belong to Him. Since you belong to Him, then you must live for Him and not live for yourself. Only by living for Him will the Lord be able to adequately meet your needs. Only then will you have the overflowing life that will enable you to minister to your spouse.

There are two good reasons why you should consecrate yourself to the Lord. Legal right is one basis of consecration and the other is a responsive love. Consecration is not only based on right according to law, but also on love that surpasses human feelings. You are a slave that the Lord bought by the highest bid. You are bought from the curse of the law by the Lord. My prayer is that God will reveal this to you clearly.

When Paul was in jail, he was free, but he did not have freedom. You must understand that it is possible for you to be free in the Lord, but that the Lord will never give you freedom to do as you desire. Your ransom price was not silver and gold, but the precious blood of our Lord. When you appreciate this as God desires, then you will willingly consecrate yourself to the Lord.

You may ask, "Since I am constrained by the love of Christ, and have seen the Lord's right, then what should I do?" When you are moved by the love of God with the knowledge that He has purchased you, you will willingly set yourself apart from everything to be completely for the Lord. Consecration means that you accept the position of serving the Lord. You will bow, worship the Almighty God, and make yourself available to the Lord to work through.

You must consecrate each member of your body. You must say, "Lord, my ears from this day on will hear only what you desire that I hear. I present to you my eyes that they may see only what you desire that I see. I present my tongue that it may say only what you desire that I say. I present my feet that they may carry me only to the places that you desire that I should go." This is truly consecration. God desires to use your body to work through to minister to your spouse.

Possibly there were slaves who were purchased that did not serve their masters from a willing, cheerful heart. Consecration means that you bow before the Lord and willingly choose to serve Him from a heart of love. Because the Lord has purchased you, you acknowledge His right to your life.

Consecration is more than love and acknowledging that you were bought by a price. It is also the choice that follows love and the purchase. Consecration separates you from everything that is of this world. Consecration means that you choose to do only what your new master commands. God never forces anyone; therefore, consecration is your choice.

Consecration is something very special. Not all of the nation of Israel were chosen by God to be consecrated. Only the Tribe of Levi was chosen, and yet only one family, the family of Aaron was consecrated. This reveals that consecration is only available to one family — the family of God. You must be a member of the family before you may be consecrated. What a privilege for the Child of God!

Every saint of God has been chosen by God to be a priest. It is God who chooses men to be consecrated to Him. One cannot make that choice. When you understand consecration, you will not consider that you are doing God a favor by forsaking all to follow the Lord. It is God who does you a favor by allowing you to work in His vineyard. When you understand consecration, you will not complain about having to be crucified from the world. We have a great God.

Do you realize that consecration means that you are chosen for the honor of serving God? When you consecrate yourself, you will not be conscious of making a sacrifice, and you will be exalted. Yes, you do make a sacrifice, but the person who is consecrated to the Lord is unconscious of making the sacrifice. Consecration demands the highest sacrifice, yet you are filled with the sense of glory and honor.

Consider Leviticus 8:18-28. There are four things spoken of to be offered. 1) A bullock for sin offering, 2) A ram for a burnt offering, 3) The second ram, an offering of consecration; 4) A basket of unleavened bread for a wave offering.

This passage reveals the way of consecration. To be consecrated to God, atonement is the first problem that one faces. Why is a bull used for the sin

offering and a ram for the consecration and burnt offering? The reason, the sin problem is a big problem and it required a big animal. Since sin was God's biggest problem, He used the big animal to solve the problem. God wanted you to know what a big problem sin is.

After the sin offering was made, the two rams were offered, one a scent offering and the other a consecration offering. The scent offering solved your problem of sin, but it was the burnt offering that gives you acceptance before God. The work of atonement was accomplished when Jesus bore our sins on the cross. When He died, the veil of the Temple was rent from top to bottom so that we may be brought to the holy of holies. This is the burnt offering.

The blood of the second ram was put on the tip of Aaron's and his sons' right ear, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot. This was called the offering of consecration.

Since the blood was put on their ear, it now meant that they are ever ready to listen to the voice of God. The blood on the right hand revealed that they were ready to do the will of God. The blood on the toe of the right foot revealed that they were ready to walk in the path of God. Since you have been accepted in Christ, you present every member of your body holy to the Lord.

Wherever you find the blood, you find the reason for love. The blood reveals that you were purchased by the Lord and that He loves you. Once you accept the blood and apply it by faith to the members of your body, you become a living sacrifice. This is the only way that you can present your body a living sacrifice holy acceptable unto the Lord.

Now we consider the wave offering. Leviticus 8:25-28. The shoulder of the ram of which is spoken is said to be the divine character of the Lord Jesus, and the fat points to the glory of God. Bread reveals His humanity. These were put into Aaron's hands to be waved before the Lord. Aaron's hands were first filled, then this was placed on the altar to be burned. This is spoken of as consecration. Once you allow God to fill your hands, that is consecration. You empty your hands of everything of this world and present them to the Lord for Him to fill.

You present your whole body in order to serve the Lord. From this day forward, no one can use any member of your body for any purpose. Only the Lord has a right to use any member of your body. You are totally for His service. Therefore,

consecration means that once you have been touched by the Lord's love and have seen the Lord's right, that you come to the Lord and earnestly ask for the privilege to serve Him. It is a marvelous thing to have a part in serving the Lord. Only after you are consecrated to the Lord will you be able to serve the Lord and minister to your spouse.

We are told in Romans 12:1 that we must present our bodies a living sacrifice. Not one member of your body must be left out. For you to present your body a living sacrifice, it must be a body that is alive from the dead. Romans 6:13, "And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

Consecration is related directly to serving the Lord rather than preaching or working for God. The word "service" means waiting on. You must learn to wait on God in order to serve Him and your spouse. Should He desire that you wait, then you wait; or stand, then you stand; or run, you run. That is what it means to wait on God.

When God bought you, He put His mark on you. You have been sealed unto the day of redemption. This word "sealed" is more in nature as a mark. A Texas rancher will brand the cattle he buys. He does this for identification of ownership. You have been marked unto the day of redemption. Therefore, your consecration is for life.

When you became a Christian, your vocation changed. When you became a Christian, you may have been a salesman, businessman, doctor, nurse, or a professional person, but now your vocation is to serve the Lord. What previously was your vocation is to serve the Lord. What previously was your vocation has now become your occupation. It is wonderful to come to the place where the only responsibility you have is unto the Lord.

The world can no longer use the members of your body. The result of consecration is holiness. Once you consecrate yourself totally to God, you may then know that you are holy unto the Lord. As a Christian your main business is serving the Lord. All other jobs are sidelines. There is a chorus which says, "I am His, I am His, Glory to His Name, For I am His."

It seems that the way of consecration should be presented is that the way of

consecration is now open. We should not persuade people to consecrate themselves. We should not beg people to serve the Lord. We should let them know of the privilege. You must know that you are not doing God a favor, but rather God is doing you a favor. It is a great honor to have the privilege to be God's slave by serving Him and ministering to your spouse.

## **Chapter 3**

### **SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD**

You not only need peace in your heart to consecrate yourself to the Lord, but you must also be separated from the world. Gal. 6: 14, "But forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." The cross of Christ separates you from the world and it separates the world from you.

II Corinthians 6:17-18, "Therefore, 'Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.'" For the Lord to receive you, you must have a pure heart. For you to touch the world will defile your heart.

When God was getting ready to bring the people of Israel out of Egypt, He told them to kill the lamb before midnight and sprinkle the blood on the doorposts. You have been saved by grace and redeemed by the blood. When the people of Israel put the blood on the doorposts, they rushed inside to eat the meal. While they ate, they had their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their walking stick in their hands because they were ready to go out of Egypt.

This reveals that the first result of redemption is separation. Since you are redeemed, you are to leave the world behind and not live as you once lived. As soon as one is born again, he must take his walking stick and make his exit. The people of Israel moved out the same night that they were saved from the death angel. You must remember that you are a pilgrim and stranger in this world.

There was once a group of 8-year-old children who were told the story about Lazarus and the rich man. The rich man enjoyed life today but suffered later, while Lazarus suffered now, but enjoyed life later. When a little girl was asked the question, "Which would you prefer to be?", she said, "While I am alive, I

choose to be the rich man, but after death, I want to be Lazarus."

Should you want to be a Christian but not separated from the world, you would be like the little girl. You cannot have both. You cannot have the blessings of God and love the things of the world. You must remember that to be redeemed by the blood is to be delivered from this world. The blood separates God's children from the people of the world and the things of the world.

It was difficult for the Israelites to leave Egypt because Egypt wanted to hold on to them. Pharaoh agreed to let them go, but he only wanted to let the men go and leave the little ones behind. You must remember that should you only leave one thing behind, you will not be able to go very far with the Lord, for you would be making plans to return to the world. This reveals love for the world which is forbidden. I John 2:15, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Should you desire to serve God and remain in the world, you will wind up serving Satan and making bricks for him. He will try to keep you from going very far for he will try to get you to leave someone or something behind. Satan knows well Matthew 6:21, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Your heart will always be where your treasure is.

Should you not overcome everything of this world, sooner or later, you will return. God wanted their flocks and their herds to go with them. Your family, your money, and all your possessions must be delivered from the world with you. God's demand is crystal clear. The one who serves Him must be separated from the world. Only when you are separated from the world can you minister to your spouse. Otherwise you will be caught in the sin of manipulation.

To confess with your mouth is not enough. You must take a definite stand to be separated from your friends of the world, affections, and relationships. Everything must go. People may think you are foolish, but you must be separated from the world.

When the people of Israel left Egypt, they made their way into the wilderness. Egypt and the wilderness stand for the world. Egypt stands for the system whereas the wilderness symbolizes the place where we live. As a Christian you

must come out of the world as a system. You must be separated from this world's system in a moral sense. Naturally you do not leave the world as a place. Your attitude is that you are only strangers and sojourners in the wilderness. This world is not your permanent home. You must look at the world as having leftint.

Since this world is not your home, then you should have your face toward the Promised Land. Should you go downtown and buy a new shirt, would you leave it behind or bring it with you? Since God bought you, He intends to bring you out. You were bought by the Lord to leave Egypt and move toward the Promised Land. He will not leave you in the world.

You may ask, "How do I know from what I must be separated?" We will mention five principles for your guide rather than listing many do's and don'ts.

**1. The things that the world considers wrong.** Anything that the people of the world consider wrong for a Christian to do, you must be separated from it. When you testify that you are a Christian, the world will set up certain standards. This is a very minimum, but at least you must measure up to their standards.

You must not allow the people of the world to ask this question, "Do Christians do such things also?" Should you engage in those activities, your testimony would be ruined. It is a disgrace to be corrected by the people of the world. Abimelech corrected Abraham for telling a lie. This was a shameful thing. Non-believers may lie, but it is unbecoming for a Christian. You must be separated from the things of the world.

**2. You must identify with the Lord.** Can you seek glory since our Lord was humiliated? Can you court the favor of the world since the world crucified our Lord? Can you expect praise from the men of the world since they slandered our Lord? The ways that He walked, you must follow. Everything that is inconsistent in your relationship with Him must go.

Matthew 10:24, "A disciple is not above his teacher nor a servant above his lord." This shows that you must be willing to suffer slander and reproach as our Lord did. Since the world treated our Lord as they did, should you expect to be treated differently? Should you be treated differently, then something is greatly wrong. You must be willing to identify with the walk of the Lord.

When you follow the Lord you must be ready for disgrace, suffering, and the cross. You must hear the Lord say, "For you to come after me, you must deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me." Your relationship to the world must be the same as His. The cross is between the Lord and the world.

You must pass by the way of the cross to stand on the Lord's side. When you experience the cross, it will separate you from the world. You must testify that the world has been crucified unto you and that you have been crucified unto the world. You are on one side of the cross and the world is on the other side.

What is the world? And what is not the world? When you know the Lord, you will only need the answer to one question. How was this thing related to the Lord when He was on the earth? Your relationship to everything must be the same as it was to the Lord. Revelation 14:4, "We follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes."

**3. Things that decrease your spiritual life.** Anything that decreases your spiritual life is of this world. When you understand these principles, you can apply them to all things. Whatever makes you lose your desire for Bible study, prayer, or to be with God's people is of the world. The things of the world cool the emotion of love for the Lord. Anything that causes you to lose the desire for the things of the Lord is of this world.

There may be some things that are not considered to be sinful, but should they cause you to lose your zeal for the Lord, then they are of this world. Anything that keeps you from desiring to confess and forsake your sins or to pray and read your Bible is of this world. Anything that weakens or defiles your conscience is of this world.

**4. Anything that will not go into the next world.** Food and drink are of this world because they will not enter into the next world. Sex is of this world because it will not enter into the next world. Not that these should be given up entirely, but that they should have no power to control you. Food and drink are legitimate, but should they have any control of you whatsoever you are not separated from the world.

**5. Social events that jeopardize your testimony.** For you to be in a place or do a certain thing that would influence your testimony, you would be hiding your light. You must let the people of the world know where you stand as far as social places and things are concerned. Any social contact that would influence your testimony, you know is of the world. You must not stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers. You can become contaminated very quickly and easily. Sin is very contagious.

**6. The things that weak believers condemn.** You must be separated from anything that would cause a weaker Christian brother or sister to stumble. I Corinthians 6:12, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient." From your standpoint, a thing might not be of the world, but a weaker Christian might consider it to be a thing of the world. I Corinthians 8:13, "Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble." It might not be convenient to abstain from things that weaker brothers condemn, nevertheless that is God's command.

God tells us that when we come out from among them, be separate, and touch no unclean thing, that He will receive us and be to us a Father and we shall be His sons and daughters. Then He uses the term "Lord Almighty." We are told that this is the first time in the New Testament where the name "The Lord Almighty" is used. This means the All-Sufficient God.

The All-Sufficient God calls us to come out from the world and not touch the unclean things that He may receive us as sons and daughters. When you leave the world, you will leave empty-handed, but you will be received by the All-Sufficient God. The only ones who have been received by the Lord in this sense are the ones who have been separated from the world. Faith is required to turn everything of this world loose, but it is the only way to experience the sufficiency of the All-Sufficient God.

You will discover the Lord to be so much more precious when you count all things as loss. You will either consider the things of the world as loss or things as treasures. Should you consider only one thing as a treasure, you do not know what it means to be received of the Father as the All-Sufficient God. When you are received by the Father, He will give you the power to minister to your spouse.

## **Part 2**

# **APPLICATION FOR MINISTRY**

### **Chapter 4**

## **CHOOSE TO MINISTER**

Once you have perfect peace, consecrate yourself to God, and have separated yourself from the world, you will have the firm foundation that will enable you to choose to minister to your spouse. Since you know that you are in the hands of a loving God, then you have confidence that whatever He directs you to do will glorify Him and be for your good. You know that everything is in His hands and that the responsibility for what is done and the results are His. You can now commit yourself to working on your marriage even though you may feel like quitting.

Now your confidence will be in the Lord regardless of what you may substantiate with your natural senses. You must believe that the Lord is able to take all things that are involved in your marriage relationship and work them together for your good. Since God is an all-powerful and all-sufficient God, then the way of obedience always leads toward fulfilling His purpose. When you trust that God is at work in your marriage to accomplish His plan, you will be ready to choose to minister to your spouse regardless of the difficulty that exists in your marriage.

When you know that His purpose is always good for you, then you will desire to be obedient to Him. When you are sensitive to God's goodness, obedience will become natural. It will reflect your free choice even though it will be painful to surrender. Yielding your will to the cross is always painful. Even though yielding to the cross is painful, nevertheless it releases you from your old man.

You must count the cost because the cost is high. Your problem is not that you do not have enough money to build the tower. The question is are you willing to spend all the money that you have to build the tower? Are you willing to put everything you have on the line in order to be obedient to God? Only then can you be fully committed to minister grace to your spouse.

Once you count the cost and you are willing to pay the price, then sooner or later you will discover that you will begin to have the desire to obey. The desire to obey will come after you make the decision to obey. Once you choose to obey God by honoring your marriage commitment, then with time you will have the desire to obey. We find in Romans 12:2 that the will of God is good. God's will for you is good for you, and it is His will that you minister to your spouse.

For you to make this choice will be taking up your cross. There is always pain in choosing the cross, just as it was with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. You must come to identify with Him at this point, "not my will, but thine be done." Should a woman have a husband who is insensitive to her desires and rules over her with an iron hand, to choose to minister to him would create pain. As a result of consecration she will be submissive. Rebellion reveals the need for consecration and obedience to the Lord.

Should you respond to the previous paragraph by saying, "I must do my duty", then something is still drastically wrong with your relationship with God. As your love for God grows, so will your desire and commitment to minister to your spouse grow. You must recognize that it is possible to have the desire to minister to your spouse, yet experience pain when you attempt to do so.

You must welcome this pain, because it is the working of the cross. It is the dying of the old man. The more you hurt when you choose to obey the Lord, the faster your old self will die. You must remember that you are depending totally on the Lord to meet all your needs and satisfy your desires rather than depending on your spouse. With this conviction, you have become a vessel that God can use to work through to meet your spouse's needs.

Once a husband experiences God's love, he will be free to love his wife. He will love her and provide her with the leadership that she needs. Once a wife has her needs of self-worth and to be loved met by God, she will know that she is secure. With this spiritual knowledge, she will be free to respect her husband and be submissive to him.

You may wonder why you should choose to minister to your spouse when you do not know how he or she will react. How your spouse reacts to your ministry is not your responsibility. Your commitment to minister to your spouse has nothing to do with the possible reaction.

Your commitment to minister grace to your spouse is based on the authority of God. Your obedience to God's authority is based on the goodness of God. Once you begin to minister to your spouse in the Name of the Lord, you will begin to experience a change in the way you feel toward your spouse. You will begin to have joy in honoring your marriage commitment. Should you not experience joy and satisfaction in honoring your marriage commitment, the fault is not with your spouse. The fault can only lie in your lack of consecration to the Lord and your lack of commitment to minister to your spouse.

In Romans 2:4, we find that the goodness of God leads to repentance. Should the goodness of God not lead you to repent, you will not choose to minister to your spouse, but then He will use His hand. As long as one is disobedient to God by not ministering to his spouse, then he will experience the discipline of God. Your basic commitment to minister to your spouse is based on your commitment to God.

Your commitment to God is based on the fact that He loved you and expressed His love toward you even while you were yet a sinner. For you to choose to commit yourself to minister to your spouse is an expression of your love toward God. Your commitment to minister to your spouse is based on the character of God and not on the character of your spouse. To love your spouse is an act of your will rather than an expression of your emotion. Therefore, you can and must love your spouse whether you feel like it or not.

Since your commitment to minister to your spouse is based on the goodness of God, then your attitude toward ministry has nothing to do with your attitude or the disposition of your spouse. You are commanded to minister to your spouse whether he is nice to you or not. Should you not minister to him, you will lose your inner peace. Your choice to minister to your spouse is based on your love for the Lord and not on whether your spouse blesses you or curses you.

You must not decide to try to minister to your spouse and see how it turns out. With this attitude, you will fail. You must choose to minister and continue to minister regardless of the consequences. No corrupt communication must come from your mouth. The strength of your commitment to minister will be based on the depth of your consecration. When you are totally consecrated to God, your choice to minister to your spouse will be easy. That does not mean that ministering to your spouse will not be painful. The greater the pain that

comes from choosing to obey God, the quicker your old man will die and the quicker you will experience release.

The more that your spouse does that you dislike, the greater is your opportunity to experience the work of the cross in your life. When you are conscious of God's goodness and His presence, you will choose to obey Him. When you choose to obey the Lord you will choose to minister to your spouse. This choice sooner or later will bring you deep, abiding joy.

The Word of God teaches that you will be better off honoring your marriage commitment than you will by breaking those commitments. Malachi 2:16, "For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence." Says the Lord of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously." You must learn to love what God loves and hate what God hates.

The Word teaches that when you become married, God makes you and your spouse one. God made you one on the basis of your commitment to each other. Malachi 14:2, "Yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant." When you and your spouse exchanged your marriage vows, the Bible says that you made a covenant. Malachi 2:15 states that God made the two of you one. God made you one on the basis of your marriage commitment to each other.

One reason that some couples are not experiencing the blessings that God desires that they experience is because they are expecting each other to meet the needs that only God can meet. For you to expect your spouse to meet your need of self-worth, to be loved, and meaning and purpose, is expecting your spouse to do something that only God can do.

Once you understand and learn how to follow the law of the Spirit of Life continuously, then God will fully meet your needs of self-worth, to be loved, and meaning and purpose. Once you take that responsibility off your spouse, then it will free him or her to minister to you.

Even though God can and will meet your basic needs, you still must be conscious that you will feel better when your spouse cooperates with you and worse when he does not. You must choose to minister and be content regardless of what God supplies for you or how your spouse reacts. You must learn to rejoice in the Lord

always even though at times you may be unhappy with your spouse. You must choose to minister to your spouse because you know that God's plan is good and that obedience brings joy to the sincere husband or wife.

Joshua 24:15, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." For you to serve the Lord, you must choose this day to minister to your spouse. Then each day you must reaffirm your commitment to minister grace to your spouse.

## **Chapter 5**

### **RECEIVE YOUR SPOUSE**

Romans 15:7, "Receive one another." To receive your spouse requires an act of your will. This verse does not specifically say, "receive your spouse," yet, should you receive one another, this would include your spouse. Therefore, God commands you to receive your spouse.

To receive your spouse means that you would take him or her to yourself. It means that you would show friendship or be friendly. It means that you would express hospitality. This is what the root word in the original language means. When you express friendliness toward your spouse, this reveals acceptance, but when you are unfriendly with unkind words, and disagreements in the marriage relationship, they must be dealt with, but there is never a time when God desires that you should be unfriendly.

Since receiving your spouse is a choice, it does not require that you have some sort of warm feeling inside. It is an act of your will rather than an expression of your emotion. When your will functions in harmony with the will of God, then your emotions will come under your control.

To receive your spouse means that there is more than toleration between one another. To continuously receive your spouse when he is disrespectful or uncooperative requires a supernatural working of God's grace in your life. This is why we place so much emphasis on the foundation for ministry. When the Spirit is free to work in your life, then you will experience this supernatural working in the form of the fruit of the Spirit.

When you experience the fruit of the Spirit in your life, it will enable you to love when you are not loved by your spouse, to have joy when joy is not expressed by your spouse, to have peace when your spouse has inner conflict, to be patient when your spouse is impatient, to be kind when your spouse is unkind, and to have self-control when your spouse is out of control.

You must be willing to receive your spouse because he or she is a gift from God. God knew which spouse you needed. God gave you the best person in the world for you to be your spouse. God has never made a mistake. Since God permitted you to marry your spouse, then it was God's permissive will. Regardless of what brought you and your spouse to the marriage altar, God will take the situation and work it together for your good that you may be conformed to the image of Christ.

James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." Your spouse is a perfect gift from God for you. Your spouse may not be perfect in your eyes, but he or she is perfect for you. Once you recognize that your spouse is perfect for you, then you will receive him or her. You must not reject God's perfect gift.

You may say, "But you just don't know the way my spouse treats me, and what all has been done." That type of statement reveals a further need in your life. It reveals a need for forgiveness. You must ask your spouse to forgive you for not loving him or her. Proverbs 10:12, "Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins." When you love your spouse as God desires, then your love will cover the sin whenever it is committed. Then there will be no need for forgiveness since you would not hold a grudge. To forgive one another as God forgave you, you would forgive before the act took place.

There is a big difference between receiving your spouse and enjoying your spouse. You are not commanded to enjoy your spouse, but you are commanded to receive your spouse. Receiving your spouse is based on your consecration to God rather than your spouse's conduct. You must receive your mate regardless of the problems and conflict that you may have.

You must believe that God is able to handle whatever problems you may have regardless of their nature. Since marriages have sensitive situations from time to time and frustrating experiences, then you must understand what it means to accept a spouse that is not perfect. God did not say receive your spouse should he be perfect, yet he is perfect in Christ.

Dr. Lawrence J. Crabb, Jr. said that when your mate irritates or disappoints you,

that you only have one of two options. You will either decide to minister or manipulate. When you decide to manipulate, you are thinking about meeting your own needs. When you choose to minister, you have your partner's needs in mind. When you have faith that God is adequately meeting all your needs, then you are free to be used of the Lord to minister to your spouse's needs. For you to choose to manipulate your spouse in any way reveals the lack of faith in God in meeting your needs.

For you to choose to receive your spouse means that you choose to bless your spouse and that you choose not to curse him. Matthew 5:43-44, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." To bless your spouse is an expression of love and to curse your spouse is an expression of hate.

The word "bless" means to praise, compliment, speak well of, to thank, to wish goodwill and to ask God's favor for. To curse is the opposite of bless. To curse means that you wish evil for, speak evil of, criticize, speak words of condemnation, accuse, speak words of judgment, torment, excommunicate, speak profanely against, swear, or use profane language.

There must not only be a time that you fully receive your spouse, but you must continuously receive him. Any expression of blessing reveals that you continue to receive him. To curse your spouse is an act of rejection. Any expression of a curse is an expression of rejection. Many husbands and wives have been cursing each other and they did not know it. There are many ways to curse your spouse without using profanity.

You can curse your spouse by accusing him even though what he did was sin. It is the work of the Spirit to convict of sin, not yours. The only way you can help your spouse who is out of fellowship with God is to restore him to fellowship. You cannot help him by accusing, judging or speaking evil of, for that is cursing. Should your spouse receive it, then he would condemn himself. It also will bring self-condemnation on yourself when you accuse or judge your spouse. With self-condemnation, you will also lose your peace.

Remember, to receive your spouse means that you show yourself to be friendly. You must have a greater desire to be friendly toward your spouse

than you are for your spouse to be friendly toward you. You must show your spouse hospitality. You must receive your and His love to your spouse. God's love will flow through you when you bless your spouse. Should you curse your spouse, you have joined the evil forces against your spouse. You must lineup your will with God's will or you will discover that your will will be in harmony with the devil's will.

When God's love overflows through your heart to your spouse, he will begin to sense his needs for self-worth and to be loved being met. You must encourage him to believe that living the Christian life is the only way to experience real meaning and purpose in life. You can measure your spouse's self-esteem by the way your spouse treats you.

When you experience problems in your marriage, you must welcome these as opportunity for ministry. Once you lay a solid foundation for ministry, you will begin to accept your ministry as a challenge. The only reason that you would neglect your responsibility to minister to your spouse is because you do not have the foundation for ministry. The foundation for ministry will give you the confidence that God will use you to minister to your spouse.

You should not expect your spouse to treat you correctly when his needs are not met. For him to treat you wrongly only reveals that his basic needs are not being met. Unless a man knows that he is secure in God's acceptance, there is no way that he can love his wife as God desires. When a woman does not feel secure in knowing her acceptance in God and experiencing God's love, there is no way for her to be submissive to her spouse and have respect for him.

You will be unable to love your spouse and minister to his needs when your needs are not met. Once you know who you are in Christ and you feel His divine love in your heart, then you will be free to minister to your spouse. The more you allow God to meet your needs, the stronger will be your desire for your spouse's need to be met.

You well know that when physical needs are not met, one moves toward physical death. Also, when these basic spiritual needs are not met, one moves toward spiritual death. Should your spouse not be trusting God to meet his basic needs, then it is likely that he will turn to you for the answer. Rather than curse him, you must learn how to bless him and gently direct him toward God.

You must recognize that regardless of how well your basic needs are met, you still cannot meet the basic needs of your spouse. You can only be a vessel through which God works to meet these needs. You must also be conscious of the true fact that God can use any kind of vessel, but that it is essential that it be clean. God will never use a dirty vessel.

You may ask, “When I minister, how do I deal with my feelings?” Should sharing your emotional feelings to your spouse minister to your spouse, then you should share them. Should sharing your feelings with your spouse hurt your spouse in any way, then you must not share them.

Should you be experiencing negative emotions such as irritation, hurt feelings, anxiety, uncontrolled anger or resentment, there is no way that sharing any of these will aid in ministering to your spouse. All of these are symptoms of inner conflict and you cannot minister as long as you have inner conflict. When you have emotions of this nature, you must turn to God. You must feel free to share them with your kind, loving, understanding Father. Your spouse cannot handle them, but your All-Sufficient Father can. Feelings of negative emotions reveal a need for the confession of sin. Your spouse is a perfect gift from God for you. Accepting your spouse does not mean that you enjoy or appreciate everything he does. Christian acceptance means that you are willing to be transparent, to give yourself in such a way that opens the possibility of painful rejection. This requires a forgiving attitude.

You have either received your spouse or rejected your spouse. Should you have rejected your spouse in any manner, then you must choose to receive your spouse. To choose to receive your spouse simply requires an act of your will by saying, “I choose.”

## **Chapter 6**

### **MINISTERING TO BASIC NEEDS**

The three basic needs of your spouse are self-worth, to be loved, and meaning and purpose. We have stated that only God can meet these needs; however, God has chosen you from among many millions to have the unique responsibility to work through to minister to your spouse. You must be keenly conscious of your spouse's needs of self-worth, to be loved, and meaning and purpose; and that only God can meet these needs.

Should your spouse not be trusting God to meet these three basic needs in his life, then this is the first place for you to start with your ministry. For a fuller understanding of basic needs and how they are met, you may see the author's book on *Counseling and Basic Needs*. Should your spouse be unwilling to study this book, then you may need to study it cautiously and then spoon-feed it to your spouse. To minister to your spouse's basic needs you must help your spouse discover the conditions that God requires so God will meet his basic needs.

Everything that you say and do should make a contribution toward increasing your spouse's self-worth. You should be very cautious and not do or say anything that would decrease your spouse's self-worth. To curse your spouse will decrease his self-worth. You must do everything you can do to help reveal God's acceptance and a deeper work of the cross.

Psalm 39:1, "I said, 'I will guard my ways, Lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, While the wicked are before me.'" Should your spouse not be meeting the conditions so God can meet his basic needs, then he is a person of unbelief. The Bible says that a person who doesn't believe is a wicked person. You should keep your mouth closed when your emotions are stirred before a wicked person.

You might say, "When I keep my mouth closed, my emotion stirs within." Psalm 39:2, "I was mute with silence, I held my peace even from good; And my sorrow was stirred up." David experienced the same thing. Verse 3, "My heart was hot within me; While I was musing, the fire burned. Then I spoke with my tongue." David seemed to believe that he just must speak, and so he did, but when he spoke, he spoke to the Lord.

Verse 4, "Lord, make me to know my end, And what is the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I am." Since your hope is in the Lord, you must wait on Him. Why must you speak to the Lord? Verse 9, "I was mute, I did not open my mouth, Because it was You who did it." The reason you must speak to the Lord, is because it is the Lord who did it. There is a very real sense that it was not your spouse who did it. Your enemy is not flesh and blood.

You should understand that your feelings should never have anything to do with what you believe or what you do. What you believe and what you do must always be based on the Word of God and the inner witness of the Spirit. When you understand that nothing that your spouse does or says will jeopardize the supply of your basic needs, then you will be free to minister to your spouse.

Even though you are unable to meet your spouse's need for self-worth, yet by the expression of your love you can cause your spouse to experience an awareness of what it means to be loved. You cannot add to his acceptance and security in Christ, but you can add to his knowledge and feeling of acceptance and security. You cannot add to your spouse's self-worth, but God can use you to lead him to become aware of his self-worth. You must trust God to enable you to minister to your spouse's basic needs.

## **Chapter 7**

### **THE SIN OF MANIPULATION**

Manipulate means that you do or say what you do for your own advantage or purpose. When you try to skillfully handle your mate for your own best interest, that is manipulation; When you try to influence your spouse so you can get what you want, that is manipulation. You try to manipulate your spouse when you try in any way to get him to satisfy your own needs or desires. There is nothing wrong with asking your spouse to do as you desire, but you must leave him free to exercise his will without any interference from you.

To be preoccupied with your mate's needs is an expression of love. To be preoccupied with the idea of your spouse meeting your needs and desires is an expression of selfishness. This type of thinking always leads to manipulation. Since manipulation is the result of selfishness, it is sin. Every interchange of ideas and expression between married couples must be to minister to the basic needs of each other.

You are in the most unique position to aid your spouse in changing. Since only God can change your spouse, then you must be submissive to the hand of God so He may be able to use you to minister to your spouse. He can do this only after you recognize that manipulation is sin and you choose to minister rather than manipulate. The only way God can use you to help change your spouse is for you to minister to your spouse rather than manipulate him.

When a couple gets married and neither understands that only God can meet their basic needs, they will be caught in a trap trying to manipulate each other to meet their own needs. When both partners indulge in seeking to manipulate their spouse to meet their own needs, it will destroy their relationship. This is why so many couples have such poor relationships.

The solution to the problem is to change your goal from manipulation to ministry. This will rebuild your relationship. Both partners should change their objectives from manipulation to ministry. For your marriage relationship to be healthy, both partners choose to minister to each other. Once both partners choose to minister, the marriage relationship will be transformed. Once this occurs, you will experience supernatural intervention in your marriage.

For you to change your goal from manipulation to ministry, you must become keenly aware of your spouse's basic needs; otherwise, your emptiness caused by the sin of manipulation will motivate you to continue to manipulate your spouse. Once your basic needs are met, you will be freed from your selfishness and freed from manipulating your spouse.

When you love, you are able to give out of your fullness. Whenever you are empty, you will demand that someone fill you. Therefore, you will be expecting to receive because of your emptiness. To be able to minister to your spouse, it is essential that you overcome the sin of manipulation. To do this, there must be an act of your will to will your selfishness to the cross. Do you agree with God that manipulation is sin? You must deal with manipulation as sin until it becomes a thing of the past.

We are listing some symptoms of manipulation:

1. **Accuse.** Any accusation reveals the desire to manipulate. You may ask, "Can't I tell my spouse when he is wrong?" Yes, but you are not to try to function as your spouse's conscience. The devil is the accuser. When you accuse your spouse, you have become a tool of the devil.

2. **To speak evil of your spouse.** You are to pray for your spouse. Prayer reveals faith in God that He will change your spouse. God forbids that you speak evil of your spouse by trying to change him. You overcome evil by doing good.

3. **To speak words of condemnation.** You cannot condemn your spouse, but it is possible for you to speak words of condemnation. Should he accept these words of condemnation, then he will condemn himself. Self condemnation always plays havoc with your self-worth.

4. **Speak words of judgment.** It is so easy to ask a judgmental question such as, "Why did you do that?" or "Don't you know better than that?" This will bring self-condemnation on you, and should your spouse accept the judgment, then, he also will bring condemnation on himself.

5. **Unconcern.** The cure for unconcern is to choose to become cooperative. It is essential that you learn to cooperate to be able to minister to your spouse. Unconcern always shows rejection.

6. **Fearful.** Fear always destroys your faith. You must learn to deal with your fear. Psalm 27:14, "Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!"

Once you deal with fear, you will notice how much more courage you have to minister. Fear is a much used tool for manipulation. Fear will always motivate you to manipulate, but love motivates you to minister.

7. **Blunt.** It is so much more comforting to your spouse for you to be diplomatic than blunt. Blunt reveals rudeness. When you are blunt, you create the possibility of offending your spouse. Diplomacy reveals courtesy.

8. **Disrespect.** There are so many little things that you can say and do that reveal that you are disrespectful. When you consider the likes and dislikes of your spouse, you will become respectful. Learn to ask questions that reveal that you care and that you want to cooperate. Respect is an expression of love.

9. **Discouragement.** Everyone needs encouragement, but it is so easy to discourage your spouse should you not be cautious. To tell your spouse "you can't do that" can be discouraging. Since your spouse has the ability to do everything that God expects him to do, then you should let your spouse know that you have the same conviction. For you to tell your spouse that he can't do any one thing that God wants him to do would be contradicting the Word of God. Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

The more you live for yourself, the more you will discourage your spouse. When you have inner peace, consecrate yourself to God, and receive your spouse, you will encourage him. One way you can encourage your spouse is to develop

the habit of perseverance. Proverbs 24:10, "If you faint in the day of adversity, Your strength is small."

10. **Depression.** Depression is a tool that some people use to try to manipulate their spouse to get what they want. Hebrews 12:1 speaks of laying aside every weight. Depression is caused by the evil spirits putting weights on your spirit. This is indirectly the hand of God, but it is the direct work of the enemy.

Proverbs 16:2, "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, But the Lord weighs the spirits." God weighs your spirit to see have you allowed the evil spirits to put weights on your spirit. You must carry your burdens to the Lord and leave them there. When your spirit is free, the Holy Spirit will be free to operate in your life. When the Holy Spirit is free to operate in your life, you will become enthusiastic. Enthusiasm will help create the desire in your spouse to live for God.

11. **Disappointment.** Disappointment reveals that you did not get what you expected. Hosea 12:6, "Always be expecting much from Him, your God." When your hope is in the Lord, it is impossible for you to be disappointed with your spouse at the same time. Your expectation must be from your God rather than from your spouse. Your hope must be in the Lord and not in your spouse.

12. **Resentment.** Resentment and holding a grudge reveal uncontrolled anger. Uncontrolled anger reveals lack of forgiveness. We are taught in Ephesians 4:32 that we should forgive one another even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. When you have a forgiving spirit, it will be impossible for you to have resentment or hold a grudge. Some spouses use resentment and hold a grudge to manipulate their spouse. This is a very common tool for manipulation.

13. **Misery.** Sometimes a person will use their misery to try to manipulate their spouse. You must be happy to minister to your spouse. This does not mean that you must be happy with your spouse, but happy in the Lord. Proverbs 16:20 teaches that whoever trusts in the Lord is happy. A little humor in the marriage is like salt in food – it seasons. Try a little humor and discover what it does to

your misery and your marriage.

14. **Unkindness.** Unkindness is an ungodly instrument for manipulation. Ephesians 4:32, "Be ye kind one to another." Once you have peace with God, it will be natural for you to be kind. Unkindness reveals inner conflict. A kind heart will be expressed with such words as please, thank you, will you forgive me?, and asking questions rather than giving commands.

15. **Retaliation.** When your spouse releases his ungodly temper on you, should you be in the habit of manipulation, you will retaliate. All retaliation reveals manipulation. James 1:20, "for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." There is no way for you to use your irritation and resentment to minister to your spouse. The solution to your problem of retaliation is meekness. When you become meek before God, you will recognize that vengeance belongs to Him. A meek person never retaliates.

16. **Harshness.** A harsh voice is often used to manipulate. A harsh voice comes from a hard heart. Ephesians 4:32 speaks of being tenderhearted. When your heart is tender, it will be expressed by a soft voice. A harsh voice reveals an additional need of the working of the cross. When the Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit in your life it will show up in your voice.

17. **Lying.** Lying, too, is a very common tool used for manipulation. Lying is forbidden by the Word. To minister to your spouse, you must choose to develop the habit of speaking the truth in love. You must be honest to minister.

18. **Laughing at your spouse.** It is alright to laugh with your spouse, but you should never laugh at your spouse. To laugh with your spouse, you only laugh at the things about which your spouse would laugh.

19. **Indecision to Minister.** Should you not have made the decision to minister to your spouse, then you will continue to manipulate. Should you not be willing, then will you ask God to make you willing? You are either willing to minister to your spouse or you are unwilling. God is able to deal with an unwilling will when you give it to Him.

These symptoms are suggestive. This is only a partial list, but it is enough to

get you started. Study these until you become conscious of your manipulation symptoms. Once you both are committed to minister, then you may agree to help each other, by pointing out symptoms of manipulation.

You must help your spouse realize his or her value as a person. You cannot do that when you manipulate. As long as you try to manipulate your spouse, you will be blinded to his needs. Should your spouse not be trusting God to meet his needs, then he greatly needs your ministry. Should your spouse not open up to you, manipulation will lock the door tighter.

When your spouse does not open up to you, you must know that he still has these basic needs. There are very few people who will reject good food when they are real hungry. When the basic needs of your spouse are not met, he will welcome your ministry when it comes by the Spirit of God, just as a starving man would welcome good food. Should a spouse reject what you call ministry, most likely he is rejecting manipulation that you are doing in the name of ministry. You must be sure that you are not trying to manipulate in the name of ministry. All manipulation reveals that you are using your spouse.

God did not make a mistake when He assigned you the responsibility of ministering to your spouse. You must see that it is a sin against God to try to manipulate your spouse rather than minister to him. Should you ask, "What do I do?," we would answer, "Change your question to what is my goal?" Any one of these manipulation symptoms reveals that your goal is wrong. It would reveal that you were demanding a response from your spouse. To demand anything is an expression of selfishness and rejection.

Once you have the foundation for ministry, are committed to the goal of ministry, aware of your spouse's needs, and convinced that you are God's chosen vessel to represent God's love to your spouse, then it will be easy for you to change your goal from manipulation to ministry.

You should let your spouse know that he is worth much to God since the Lord paid the highest price to redeem Him. You should let him know that he is worth much to you and that he is loved and a very special person to you. Your spouse will most likely welcome this kind of ministry. When you minister grace, it will edify. No one will resent a compliment. The better you learn to follow the leadership of the Spirit, the better you will be able to minister to your spouse.

Anything that you do or say that contributes to your spouse's self-worth will be accepted.

You must deal with the sin of manipulation until it ceases to show up in your life. You must continuously reaffirm your decision to minister. You must learn everything you can about how to minister to your spouse and expect the sin of manipulation to become a thing of the past.

## **Chapter 8**

# **COMMUNICATION**

Communication is one of the most common problems in marriages. Recently a lady told me that it was impossible for her and her husband to talk about anything personal without getting into an argument. One person told me that whenever he tried to explain to his spouse about some of his likes and dislikes, that the response was an accusation of selfishness. Some couples can talk about anything except their own relationship.

All of these statements reveal problems in communication. Something is greatly wrong. Why do many efforts to communicate seem to cause additional tension and friction? When you deal with the sin of manipulation, it will help immensely to bridge the communication gap.

After you choose to minister to your spouse, it may take a bit of time before your spouse chooses to minister to you. Communication can be aided a great deal when only one spouse, chooses to minister. When both partners choose to minister to each other, the communication gap begins to disappear rapidly.

The foundation for proper communication is the commitment for both partners to set the goal for ministry. Both partners must choose to minister to the needs of each other regardless of the reactions. Each must be concerned about their spouse's spiritual welfare. You must stay open to God or the devil will deceive you and you will be manipulating, thinking that you are ministering.

God did not ask you did you want to minister to your spouse. It is not an option. Ephesians 5:21, “submitting to one another in the fear of God.” One scholar said this meant for a husband to submit to his wife's needs by loving his wife and that a wife was to submit to her husband's needs by respecting him.

God will not allow anyone to continuously seek to minister to other people's needs and neglect the ministry to his spouse. One way that God quite often gets one's attention who neglects the ministry to his spouse is by allowing problems to

develop in the marriage. Should you be having serious problems communicating with your spouse, then there has been more manipulation than there has ministry.

Most communication problems can be traced directly to the problem of manipulation. You need to learn the verbal strategy for sharing and the wisdom of listening, but the basic problem is selfishness, which always causes manipulation. Your heart will have to be circumcised before you can shift from manipulation to ministry. The only thing that will solve your communication problems is a mutual commitment to ministry.

The Word of God sheds light on your communication problems. James 4:1-3, "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures." To speak of the desires that war in your flesh speaks of inner conflict. Inner conflict must be replaced by inner peace for the communication to be wholesome. Communication problems occur when self-centered goals are pursued.

When you enter marriage with wrong convictions about your needs and how your spouse should respond to you, you will indulge in manipulation. This always jeopardizes communication. Should you have the conviction that your spouse should treat you in a certain way, then you must change that conviction. Even though you may find biblical support for your justification that your spouse should change his behavior, yet you have no right to demand anything from your spouse.

Even though you know that it is God's will for your spouse to change, still it is not your responsibility to change him. God never desires that you demand anything from your spouse. You must know that your choice to minister to your spouse never depends on his attitude or behavior.

All the faith that you have is required for you to be capable of giving to your partner, especially when you experience the pain of rejection. To maintain your commitment to ministry when your partner lets you down requires living faith. It will require a deep work of grace to consistently minister and never manipulate. Even though you may not have arrived at that state, yet

that must be your goal.

One essential is to always maintain your inner peace. For you to condemn yourself for not being able to minister as you know you should or for you to manipulate will jeopardize your inner peace. When your inner peace is disturbed, your communication will be disturbed. Inner peace is a must for communication to be effective.

Negative feelings that we all experience from time to time jeopardize effective communication. You must learn how to deal with your unpleasant feelings. Should you ask the question, "What do I do with my feelings," we would answer, "The Word of God has the solution." All negative feelings are a result of the lusts of the flesh. You must yield them to the cross. The cross is for the purpose of eliminating all that is undesirable in your life. Negative emotions reveal that your emotions need to be purified.

When you discover a negative feeling, that should be your clue to deal immediately with your will. It is so much easier to directly control your will than it is to try to correct your emotions. It is not scriptural for you to express your negative emotions to your spouse. Should you be in the habit of expressing your negative emotions to your spouse and your positive emotions to your friends, then you need to repent. When you repent, you will express your negative emotions to your Heavenly Father who cares and your positive emotions to your spouse who desperately needs that ministry.

This will take a transformation in your life, but as it begins to occur, you will be amazed at the difference in communication. When your mind is renewed your will be transformed and communication will be much improved. A couple whose minds are renewed will be able to work out their communication problems.

Should your spouse ask you do you possess a negative emotion such as fear, anxiety, or resentment, you must be truthful. Never pretend that you feel one way when feel another. Confess your faults one to another. This is different from sharing your negative emotions for the sake of sympathy or manipulation. According to scripture, no one has a right to pour his ill-emotion out on his spouse.

Consider uncontrolled anger as an example: You have three options: 1. You may blow up, 2. You may clam up (this would be directing your negative emotions toward yourself), or 3. You can handle it God's way. God's way is for the cross to eliminate it. Both number one and number two are sinful and harmful to you.

When you confess your negative emotion to God, you must be truthful with God. Should you be jealous you could tell God that you are jealous but that you desire to repent. Any negative emotion that does not contribute to fulfilling God's purpose by ministering grace to your spouse should be eliminated by the cross. The only emotion that you should share with your spouse is one that would aid in ministry to your spouse. Once you learn to control your will, then you will be able to begin to get hold of your mind and your emotions.

Not only does your mind need to be renewed, but your emotions also need to be renewed. Your will and emotion are renewed when your mind is renewed. Any undealt-with sin in your life will infect your will, mind and emotions; therefore, they need to be healed. Your will, emotions and memory will start the healing process once your will, mind and emotions are renewed. As long as your mind stays renewed, they will continue to heal. The more that your emotions heal, the easier it will be for you to control your emotions. It will be easier for you to react in a godly manner to your spouse's thoughts and ways.

We have stated that it is wrong for you to demand things from your spouse; however, we must consider the difference between needs and desires. Regardless of how committed you are to minister to your spouse, you will still have the desire for your spouse to minister to you. You must see that it is possible for your spouse to withhold some of your desires, but it is impossible for him to jeopardize the supply of your basic needs.

It is wholesome for a husband to desire to come home to a loving wife and experience her warm emotions. It is wholesome for a woman to want to feel the closeness of her spouse whom she loves. There are many other desires that are normal and wholesome. A husband and wife must learn to communicate in regard to their normal desires. It is normal for you to have certain desires for certain kinds of response from your spouse.

You must become free to share your likes and dislikes with your spouse. To receive your spouse means that you are willing to live with him on a friendly basis. You must cultivate your relationship that it might become a friendly relationship. Your spouse should be the best friend that you have. Only by being close friends can a couple live the most intimate relationship which God desires. The reason it is possible for you to have a full and meaningful relationship with your spouse is because this is God's desire.

When you have a strong desire for your spouse to love you and respond to your love, then it is normal to feel hurt when you sense rejection by your spouse, and you will also feel good when you are accepted. It is amazing that God has given us the ability to influence one another so much. Because of the burning desire for each other's love, we are capable of receiving our spouse with real joy. Communication will be aided greatly when you remember that your goal is ministry and that your desire is a warm response. The more you minister to your spouse's needs, the more God can use your spouse to minister to your needs and satisfy your desires.

We have continuously declared that God is able to adequately meet all your needs. God has promised to meet all your needs when you meet the conditions, but you must remember He has never promised to meet all your desires. The more your legitimate desires are met, the more fulfilled you will feel.

You may feel unpleasant as long as your desires remain unmet, but you must choose to be content with what God supplies. You must learn to trust God for your needs and desires rather than trusting your spouse to meet either. You will be secure and significant when your needs are fully met, but you will feel secure and significant only when your legitimate desires are met. You must continue to minister to your spouse whether he is willing for God to use him to minister to your needs and desires or not. This type of attitude will keep the lines of communication open.

God may never do a work of grace in your spouse's life so that he would live a life that would be totally pleasing to you. God may never give you the response from your spouse that you desire, but when you meet the condition, God has promised to satisfy your heart. An example is Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is my

shepherd; I shall not want." When the Lord becomes your shepherd, he also will satisfy your desires. He may not give you what you want, but he will satisfy your desires. You must never assume the responsibility for fulfilling your desires any more than you assume the responsibility to meet your basic needs. These all must be committed to the Lord.

Once you commit your needs and desires totally to God, then this frees you to communicate with your spouse without the fear of rejection or jeopardizing your needs or desires. Once your spouse is convinced that you have his needs at heart, then he, too, will begin to open up in communication. It is imperative that communication be open for you to be able to minister to your spouse as God desires.

## **Chapter 9**

# **THE ROLE OF SEX IN MARRIAGE**

Sex was God's idea, not man's. It was God who thought of sex. Sex was in existence before sin came into the world. Sex-consciousness is God-given; therefore, holy and natural. God ordained sex in marriage not only for reproduction but also for expressing one's love to his mate.

When sex is elevated to God's desire, it will be the climax of expression of love toward your mate. Your primary objective in sex should be to satisfy your spouse.

When couples have problems in the area of sex, it only indicates deeper problems. When a couple has problems in communication, they also will be having problems becoming one flesh. Your communication problems must be solved before you can solve problems in sex.

Since you have a spirit, soul, and body, then God desires that you be able to communicate spiritually; psychologically, and physically. It is impossible for a couple to enjoy physical union unless they have open verbal communication. Should you and your spouse be having problems in communication, this only reveals that you are having problems communicating in the spiritual realm. You can solve your vocal and physical problems when your spiritual problems are solved.

May we briefly mention some basic truths that will help tremendously should you be having problems in the areas of verbal communication and sex. You must be actively involved on a consistent basis in Bible study, prayer, worship, and ministry. You must feel free to study and discuss the Word of God together and apply it to your daily lives. When you keep the unity of the spirit, you will have great hope that your other problems will be worked out.

Should your spouse not choose to cooperate with you in the spiritual realm, you must realize this is not basically your responsibility. You must remember that you should never mix ministry and the sin of manipulation in any way. Should

you and your spouse not have a meaningful spiritual relationship, it is not likely that God will allow you to greatly enjoy your physical relationship.

Problems in the spiritual realm spill over into all areas of life. When there is one undealt-with sin in your life it affects every area of life. The most noticeable will be in the bedroom.

Sex should not be considered to be sinful in your relationship because sex is necessary to complete the biblical picture of one flesh. God not only desires for couples to communicate on the spiritual basis, psychological basis, but also on the physical. God not only desires that you have a meaningful spiritual and psychological relationship, but also a meaningful physical relationship. When a couple follows God's total design, they will experience a meaningful relationship spiritually, psychologically, and sexually. When you follow God's desire, you will experience meaning and pleasure in your sex relationship.

God does not want your sex life to be filled with tension and frustration. God does not want you to settle for less than He has provided. God designed the sex relationship to reveal more clearly your relationship to Him. Our relationship with Christ has been referred to several places in the scripture as a marriage relationship. The church is spoken of as His Bride. Revelation speaks of the marriage of the Lamb. It seems to me that God will not allow you to enjoy your physical relationship more than you enjoy your spiritual relationship with Him.

My conviction is that the Song of Solomon is presented primarily to present our love, relationship to the Lord. This seems to me that our relationship to the Lord is related to the bedroom relationship. All the Christian counselors that I know and have read indicate that when a couple has a meaningful and satisfying relationship with the Lord, they also have a better sexual experience. Sex is a gift from God, but God will never allow you to continuously enjoy His gifts more than you enjoy Him.

There is greater opportunity for personal satisfaction in sex than many couples have ever experienced. You must expect your deepest joy and satisfaction to come through your relationship with the Lord. A deeper joy and a satisfying experience with the Lord will lead to a greater pleasure and satisfaction in the bedroom. However, you must be keenly aware of the fact that God expects you to experience more joy and satisfaction in your relationship with

Him than you do with your mate

There seems to be basically two extremes in regard to sex problems with many couples. It seems that one places too much emphasis on sex while the other does not place enough. Sometimes the one who places too much emphasis on sex is trying to satisfy his basic spiritual need with physical pleasure. God will never allow you to satisfy any spiritual need in any way by physical pleasure. When your basic needs of self-worth, to be loved, and meaning and purpose are not met, they will cause a severe inner pain, but this pain caused by not having your basic needs met can never be satisfied by any kind of physical pleasure.

When you have inner pain caused by emptiness, loneliness, fear, or rejection, you may be tempted to gain temporary relief by sex. Some people indulge in food and drink to try to soothe that inner pain. The temptation is to try to relieve the inner pain with some good feeling. Sometimes a spouse will seek to avoid sex in order to avoid confusion, frustration, tension, and other difficulties. The other extreme is for a person to become extensively preoccupied with the pleasure of sex, trying to find release from his aches and pains.

The spouse who tries to find release from his aches and pains by sex should turn to the Lord for release. The spouse who tries to avoid confusion, frustration, tension, and other difficulties by avoiding sex should turn to the Lord for the solution and then allow his spouse to have his right to his mate's body. Each spouse must be willing to make some adjustments. You must learn to accommodate your spouse. Sometimes one partner will be higher-sexed than the spouse. When this occurs, each must make some adjustment.

Some men when feeling rejected by their spouse try to soothe the pain in sexual relations with another woman the same can be true of a wife. This will only compound the problem.

When your basic needs of life are not met you will sense an inner feeling that demands attention. You must have the conviction that physical pleasure will not relieve your inner pain.

We do recognize that sex does provide a temporary physical solution to inner pain, but it is only temporary, Satan has sold people a bill of goods. He seeks to counterfeit the real union with the Lord. Therefore he substitutes the union

in sex. This is his deception. The satisfying experience that some people try to find in sex can only be found in an intimate relationship with the Lord.

Satan will try to convince you that the excitement in sex is the ultimate in satisfaction. The only person who will believe that is the one who has not experienced a deep relationship with the Lord. Sex without a meaningful relationship based on a loving commitment may satisfy the body, but it will leave the soul and spirit, to starve. Sex may offer pleasure to the body, but there will be no real meaning to the person unless it is based on a loving commitment.

God desires that you experience more than pleasure for your body. God desires that you have meaning in addition to the legitimate physical pleasure in sex. To experience personal meaning, you must participate in God's purpose. God's purpose is for you to express His love to your mate rather than seek to satisfy your desire for physical pleasure. One of God's ways for building the church is to build the marriage relationship. When the marriage relationship is built up, so will the church be built. Not only will the nation go as the family goes, but also the church will go as the families go.

Even though there will not be marriage in Heaven, you are still building for eternity when you minister to your spouse because you are contributing to the spiritual growth of an individual. To enjoy meaning and purpose in marriage there must be a continuous commitment to minister to your mate. The more you minister to your spouse's total needs, the more meaning and purpose you will experience. Once you are fully persuaded that God will meet your needs and desires, then you are free to expect God to use you to meet the sexual needs of your spouse.

Perfect love cast out fear. Love is more powerful than fear. When you experience God's love, you will not fear rejection. Should your spouse react coldly, indifferently, or critically, you will feel hurt, but you also will be conformed by the Lord.

Meaning and purpose in marriage depends primarily on your spiritual needs being met. Psychological and physical developments are built on spiritual union. With development on all three levels you will begin to experience a vital, intimate relationship with your spouse. A healthy and meaningful sexual relationship will

help release your personality. Your personality is touched deeply in sex.

Once you begin to experience meaning and purpose in all three areas of life, communication will begin to be more than just routine. The development of unusual closeness will develop. The more intimate you become with your spouse spiritually and psychologically, the richer your sexual experience will become.

You will become more interested in expressing love than making love. It is a poor testimony for the Lord when a Christian couple cannot live together in harmony. When you experience spiritual, psychological, and physical union, it will be a testimony of the gospel of our Lord to the world. The Lord has done all that is necessary to enable a Christian couple to live in harmony spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically.

God wants you to experience more than sexual excitement. He wants you to experience the joy and pleasure that comes from the physical union of two people deeply in love in a relationship of spirit, soul and body. The Bible speaks of a man finding satisfaction from the pleasure that his wife's body offers. The reason this is possible is because it is God's desire.

Since God desires that couples enjoy sex, why is it that some experience disappointment, anxiety, and fear rather than fulfillment? Why do some couples have so much conflict about sex?

Why is it that some individuals experience greater sexual pleasure outside of marriage than in marriage? This is because the person outside of marriage is not a threat to your basic needs, yet it is God's design that you experience greater joy and pleasure within your marriage relationship.

We are told that sex problems are sometimes caused by so-called psychological disorders or emotional hang-ups. The psychological disorders and emotional hang-ups are only symptoms of unmet basic needs. When your basic needs are not met, you have fear in opening up and trusting anyone.

You will discover that once your basic needs are met by the Lord, these psychological disorders and emotional hang-ups will fall by the wayside. Many problems in sex relations are only symptoms of unmet basic needs. You will be

pleasantly surprised at the joy and pleasure you receive in sex with your spouse once you have a meaningful relationship with the Lord and He fully meets your basic needs.

One of the problems that exists in sex is when a person's basic needs are not met, he will have the tendency to turn to other people to meet these needs. One now seeks to manipulate his spouse so that he will experience the satisfaction and pleasure that he desires. Over a period of time the problems in sex become intensified because the person has the wrong conviction that his spouse can meet his basic needs instead of God. Even should you manipulate your spouse to change, still

The problems will become further intensified when a person is unable to reach his goal because he will experience either guilt, resentment, or anxiety. When you experience one of these negative emotions it will play havoc with your sex life. This is why some people experience greater pleasure outside of marriage.

It is impossible to be angry at your spouse and express your love at the same time. Anxiety will keep you from having mental freedom and it will keep you from becoming involved in expressing your love in sex. Your sexual excitement will be jeopardized by the negative emotion of guilt. Most problems that keep a couple from enjoying sex can be attributed to manipulation.

You cannot expect to feel right when you have even one of the negative emotions of guilt, anger or anxiety. The solution to your problem is to shift from manipulation to ministry. You must be committed to ministering to each other's needs. When this change is made, the negative emotions will give way to compassion and to expressions of love toward your spouse.

You may ask, "Why is this true?" It is true because your spouse can not block your goal of ministry. When you have goals to manipulate and your spouse blocks those goals, it is natural for you to respond with a negative emotion. When your goal is to minister to your spouse's needs and desires, you will become a non-threatened individual.

You may hurt because of rejection, but you can take that burden to the Lord and leave it there. For you to engage in ministry to your spouse does not involve a decision on your spouse's part. Since the results of your ministry are in the Lord's hands, then you will not have anxiety over your mate's response.

Once you choose to minister to your spouse, you must be cautious to stay on the path. Should you discover that you indulge in manipulation, then you must confess that sin and choose to forsake it. Then reaffirm your choice to minister. Should you be having sexual problems, first, examine your spiritual relationship with the Lord. Be sure you are restored to fellowship with Him and then be reconciled to your spouse.

This is a difficult road, but you can do it and it is worth the sacrifice and efforts. All things are possible with God. When you build your marriage on all three aspects of spirit, soul and body union, you will testify by example to the world of the union of Christ and His Bride, the Church. The expression and pleasure from an enjoyable sexual experience will come from a meaningful personal relationship. You must choose to do all that you do to glorify the Lord. You will glorify the Lord in your sex experience when your motive is to satisfy your mate instead of satisfying yourself.