

Key Text: Mark 10:8,9

“...and the two will be one. So they are no longer two but one. Therefore, don't let anyone separate what God has joined together.”

WHY IS UNITY IN MARRIAGE IMPORTANT? Unity in marriage is important because without it the home and the relationship will fall apart. This unity could be applied on many levels but it especially applies to these three, **Spiritual Unity, Physical Unity, and Practical Unity.** (**2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Corinthians 7:14,15; Titus 1:6 and the analogy of Mark 3:25; Unity in the physical is important...1 Corinthians 6:16**) Think of these levels like a “Three-legged” stool. A person might be able to maintain balance with only two legs but if there is only one leg left or only one area of unity left, then a fall is “INEVITABLE”. This study is focused on ways to promote unity and peace in the home. **BUT, You will need to choose to pursue peace and unity, it will not happen on its own.** **1 Peter 3:8-12.** Make unity a focus and if you must fight, fight for UNITY. (*See Hebrews 12:14 Pursue peace “intently”*) The fight is worth it because of the promise of blessing from God whenever there is unity. (*Psalm 133:1-3 where brethren dwell together in unity, there God commands a blessing.*)

HERE ARE SOME ADDITIONAL REASONS TO BE UNIFIED IN MARRIAGE...

UNITY IN MARRIAGE IS GOD'S DESIGN:

- Adam said you are one: Gen. 2:23
- Jesus said you are one: Matthew 19:4-6
- Paul said you are one: Ephesians 5:30-32

UNITY IN THE SPIRIT GUARDS US FROM REBELLION:

- Remember Israel's warning against a love that leads us away from God...Deuteronomy 7:3,4 & 2 Corinthians 6:14

UNITY IN PRACTICAL MATTERS PROVES THAT WE CAN LEAD IN SPIRITUAL MATTERS:

- We are intended to be an example in practical matters: 1 Timothy 3:4,5

UNITY IN THE RELATIONSHIP IS NEEDED IF WE EXPECT PRAYER TO BE EFFECTIVE:

- Strained and bitter relationships at home will hinder our prayers. 1 Peter 3:7: Matthew 5:24

UNITY IN THE BEDROOM PROVIDES ADDED PROTECTION:

- A husband and wife can help each other guard against temptation. 1 Corinthians 7:5

UNITY, IN GENERAL, WILL ADD STRENGTH TO YOUR LIFE:

- Two people can accomplish more than one person who is all alone. Ecclesiastes 4:9,12.

Some behaviors that will promote unity are:

HUMILITY

(Think of the other persons' interests more than your own.)

OVERLOOK

(Shift your focus away from things that will fester bitterness or resentment.)

USE GOOD WORDS

(Guard your mouth, think good things and speak good things about your spouse.)

FORGIVE

(Release your spouse from your Judgment and penalty)

BE A PEACEMAKER

(Initiate conversations and behavior that will make for peace. Do not wait for someone else to start!)

UNITY IS A RESPONSIBILITY

Diligence in your home is really a marathon of fulfilling your “GOD-Given” duties and responsibilities. If you allow yourself to slack off in a particular area of responsibility then your relationship will suffer and it will need greater focus and even some repairs. Remember this analogy used in scripture: **“A roof sags because of laziness. A house leaks because of idle hands.” Ecclesiastes 10:18.** Another aspect to consider is the effect on your relationship when someone “OTHER” than “YOU” takes over one of your responsibilities. What do you think will happen if another woman gives your husband respect and honor instead of you? What will happen if another man cherishes and nurtures your wife instead of you? This kind of neglect will be like a magnet in the heart pulling you further apart from one another. The main point is that you and you alone have the GOD-Given role of husband or wife, nobody else should fill your shoes.

THE MAN’S RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Submission to God as Lord: 1 Cor. 11:3. Taking the initiative to surrender is what qualifies you for leadership in the Christian home.
- Lead the Home in following God: By setting an example and creating a Structure...The husband must set the pattern to follow. Joshua 24:15; Deut. 6:7,11:19. What are the Patterns that you have set in the home for following God?
- To Leave and Cleave: Gen. 2:24-25. Undivided focus; The wife is the prize and is what the husband pursues always. How are you pursuing your wife right now?
- HELP: To be a helper for his Wife: Eph. 5:28,29. Provision and Protection are part of your help...1 Timothy 5:8.
- To Be Self-sacrificing: Ephesians. 5:25. Preferential treatment is the basis for this concept. She comes first. So, how are you demonstrating this in your home?
- To Cherish. (Impart warmth, care for and foster life. Ephesians. 5:28,29: 1 Peter 3:7) Be an understanding husband. Physically and emotionally you must be “Safe” and “Gentle”. Are you approachable and easy to talk to?
- WASH WITH THE WORD: Use words that give life. Prophetically, speak over your wife. Affirm God’s words about her by reminding your wife what God says about her. Ephesians 4:29; 5:26; Col. 3:19.
- Physical comfort and intimacy: Your body belongs to your wife. Physical affection and care are meant to reinforce the spiritual and practical unity in the home. 1 Cor. 7:3,4

THE WOMAN’S RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Submission to your husband in reverence for God: 1 Cor. 11:3; Titus 2:4 This is choosing to allow the husband to influence the patterns and “tone” of the home.
- Be a helper: Gen. 2:18. Practically this may include everything from Home-making to working outside the home to help provide for practical needs. See Proverbs 31:10-12, 16-18.
- Manages Practical matters involving children and life. Proverbs 31:27,28. Faithful in all matters...1 Timothy 3:11. The goal is not simply being busy but to be diligent and “Faithful” to your family’s goals and calling.
- Maintain an attitude of Meekness and Quietness: 1 Peter 3:15. Accept that God will be your Avenger and that He alone will change the heart of your husband if there is an imbalance.
- Honor and reverence: Ephesians 5:24,33; 1 Peter 3:6. To give preferred treatment to a husband is fulfilling “The Law of Love”. In what ways are you showing Him preference?
- Be a public support and blessing: Proverbs12:4; 31:23. A Wife alone can defend the honor and position of the Husband with great effectiveness. Do not allow a diminished view or a belittling of your husbands’ importance. How do others know that your husband is important to you?
- Physical comfort and intimacy: Your body belongs to your husband. Physical affection and care are meant to reinforce the spiritual and practical unity in the home. 1 Cor. 7:3,4.

“THE RISK FOR NEGLECT GROWS THE LONGER YOU ARE MARRIED”

NEGLECT IS THE FAILURE TO GIVE PROPER ATTENTION TO YOUR SPOUSE, AVOIDING OR DISREGARDING DUTY AND IS MARKED BY A HABIT OF CARELESSNESS.

WHAT IF I AM MARRIED TO AN UNBELIEVER? HOW CAN THERE BE UNITY?

The challenges are unavoidable but you can overcome them all with one exception. You can't force an unbelieving spouse to "Stay" if they refuse to tolerate you and your faith. (See. *1 Corinthians 7:12-15*) If you are forced to choose between one or the other, you must choose God. BUT, NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF GOD, HE CAN CHANGE A HEART. So, keep your faith and follow these directions: **Win your spouse without words!** Let your spouse see the effects of the life of Christ in you. (*1 Peter 3:1,2 ... Their wives could win these men for Christ by the way they live...*) You can still enjoy great unity in Physical and Practical areas as a result of your own Godly Character. (*As far as it depends on YOU be at peace... Romans 12:18*) In the areas of Physical and Practical responsibilities continue to maintain the responsibilities listed above.

THE ROAD BACK TO UNITY

When there is a "distance" or separation between a husband and wife there is a cause and that must be addressed. The cause has an appropriate analogy, "Wormwood" or "Hemlock". This poison was used in the Bible to illustrate the secret thoughts that were fueling sin. (***Deut. 29:18; Hebrews 12:15***) This "**Bitter Root**" represents all that defiles us and causes separation from God and from other people. There are at least four likely causes of a bitter root. They are **1. Sinful attitudes & actions. 2. Misunderstandings. 3. Differences. 4. Our wants & competition.** Regardless of the source for your division, the road back to unity has some main objectives. When considering these understand that they each take time and require a reliance upon the work of the Holy Spirit. So remain patient and sensitive to God. **DON'T GIVE UP!** Keep your eyes on Christ for motivation!

Objective one: Change your Focus to God: Instead of focusing on yourself, or your rights, your hurts, and even your sense of right and wrong, change your focus to God. *Decide to Glorify God in your marriage.* You can do this in three ways, by **Imitating** Christ through Trusting & Obeying Him, by **Serving** your spouse through carrying a burden or giving loving confrontation. And lastly, through "Your" **Growth**, where you will produce the fruit of the spirit and evidence of a change in your heart.

Objective two: Get the "log" out of your own eye! Decide to get real with God before you go any further with your spouse. This is when you deal with any "LOGS" in your own eye. Remember that even if you are only guilty of 2% of the problem you are still 100% responsible for that 2%. Search your heart and ask yourself, "What are the sinful attitudes and actions in your heart?" "What is driving you?" "What are your quick judgments/criticisms and your out of control desires or wants?" Bring those into the light of Christ and deal with them personally and with a trusted counselor/friend. (See. *Psalms 139:23-24*)

Do not fall into this trap:
"LOOKING FOR LOVE IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES"

Have you ever heard this...
"I know He is not a Christian, but I believe that I am supposed to be a witness to Him."

This is both TRUE and FALSE but it really is just rebellion against God. If this is your reason for starting a romantic relationship with an unbeliever then you are in "TOTAL" rebellion against the clear word of God. This sentiment is only true in that you should be a witness to all people, but it is false if the word "witness" means romance. If this kind of rebellion and compromise is allowed at the beginning of your relationship, the foundation is compromised and the blessing of God is not what you will experience.

THE PRINCIPLES ARE:

Believers look for romance with other believers.

If you are already in a marriage and then come to faith...stay in the marriage even if your spouse is still an unbeliever.

(Deut. 7:2-3; 2 Cor. 6:14;
1 Cor. 7:17, 24)

Prior to moving onto the next objective pause to “Get Real” and make your CONFESSION. It is very important for you to take full responsibility and to admit your part in the conflict to your spouse. But if you confess your fault and do it in a *weak* or *evasive* way you will even make things worse! Use these **Seven “A’s”** of confession without making an excuse or shifting the blame.

- A - Address only those affected but address everyone.
- A - Avoid using the words, “**If**” “**but**” and “**Maybe**” or making any excuses & justifications.
- A - Admit specifically what you have done.
- A - Acknowledge the hurt you have caused. Show you understand the pain you have caused.
- A - Accept the consequences.
- A - Alter your behavior.
- A - **Allow time** after you ask for forgiveness.

KEY SCRIPTURES FOR THIS ROAD:

Matthew 7:3-5; Proverbs 19:11; Matthew 15:18-19; 18:15, 21-35; James 4:1-3; Galatians 6:1,2. Colossians 3:13. 2 Corinthians 2:7,8.

REMEMBER: These 7 “A’s” are not a meaningless formula. If you do not treat this with sincerity and still try to conceal your own sin you will not prosper or see a true restoration of your relationship. Make this part all about God and your spouse instead of your own “GUILT” and your own perspective. Serve your spouse through your confession and you may be surprised by fresh mercy. (*Proverbs 28:13*)

Objective three: RESTORE. We must gently restore the **HEART - CONNECTION** that was broken throughout the conflict. This will involve one of two activities. One, you may choose to **OVERLOOK** whatever the offense was or two, you may need to lovingly **CONFRONT** your spouse about the problem. Before you choose to confront you should ask if the offense is something you should overlook. If you believe the answer is “NO” to ALL of these questions then it is to your honor to overlook whatever the offense has been. **BUT**, if you can honestly say “YES” to any of these questions, then it is a good idea to confront.

- Is this sin “Seriously” dishonoring God? (*This only has significance to the spouse that is a believer.*)
- Has this conflict permanently damaged our relationship?
- Is my spouse “Seriously” hurting me or someone else?
- Is my spouse “Seriously” hurting themselves?

If you confront:
Remember to do it in a manner that you yourself would accept. Speak only what would benefit, keep it short and specific, and do it in the best time & place.

At this point, you will move to the final objective.

If you choose to confront your spouse, then understand that your spouse will have to start at the beginning of this **ROAD TOWARD UNITY** for their self and you will need to give them time.

Objective four: UNITY through forgiveness. Here is when a promise of forgiveness is made. What this involves is a genuine commitment to four actions. Notice how these four promises reflect the very nature of God’s forgiveness toward us individually. You must persevere in love and move on in your relationship.

- “I promise NOT to **DWELL** on this offense.”
- “I promise NOT to bring it up **AGAINST** you.”
- “I promise NOT to **ABOUT THIS** with others.”
- “I promise NOT to allow this to **BLOCK** my love for you.”