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THE HERALD

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5 HABITS OF A HEALTHY MARRIAGE

By Hans Molegraaf

I've heard it said that success is the sum of small efforts repeated day in and day out. I couldn't agree more.

The same is true in marriage. The success of your marriage depends on the small efforts repeated every day. The question is, what are your daily marriage habits?

If you want a healthy marriage, I'd like to suggest you start pursuing the following 5 habits today!

Habit #1: Say, "I Love You"

The day you stop saying "I love you" to your spouse is the day your marriage starts to drift in the wrong direction. Why? Love leaks.

Think about it this way. You've probably heard it said that we all have an imaginary "love tank" and we should try and make sure our spouse's tank is always full. Ever wonder why that's so hard? Your spouse's love tank has holes in it. Lots of them. Oh, and by the way...yours does too. That's why that special "something" you did last week doesn't mean much to your spouse today.

Healthy marriages say, "I love you" to each other a hundred different ways every day. I've heard it said that love unexpressed is not love at all. Since love leaks, we should constantly be looking for ways to remind and re-affirm our love to our spouse.

By the way, since your spouse's "love tank" has holes in it, you will always be fighting an uphill battle to keep it full. But don't be discouraged or feel an inappropriate amount of pressure with this task. Although we have a responsibility to love our spouse, we don't have a responsibility to keep our spouse's love tank full. The deposits we make in our spouse's tank will eventually drain, but God's love from within the tank has an endless supply. That's why one of the most loving things

we can do for our spouse is to point them to the One who can legitimately keep the tank full.

“Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” - John 7:38

Habit #2 – Say, “I Was Wrong”

Marriage will make you miserable, if you let it.

Marriage is designed to reveal your areas of weakness. When you put a husband and wife (2 sinners) together in the same house, in the same room, sleeping in the same bed...and then you throw some little sinners in the mix...your weaknesses are bound to show up from time to time. How you respond to the weaknesses that your marriage reveals will either make you miserable or mature.

When we minimize, hide, or even deny the weaknesses that marriage exposes in us, we'll be miserable. Consider this passage from Psalm 32:3-4: “When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.”

Because of God's acceptance and forgiveness, He invites us to confess our weaknesses to Him (1 John 1:9) and our spouse (James 5:16) and rely on His grace to help us grow in our areas of weakness.

“But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

When marriage reveals our weaknesses, and it will, be willing to humbly respond by saying, “I was wrong, will you please forgive me”. It's one of the most attractive phrases you can say to your spouse.

Habit #3: Say, “I Wish”

This is your chance to be selfish...for your spouse's sake.

Your spouse's most significant responsibility on the planet is to love you well (Matthew 22:35-40). Does your spouse always know exactly what that looks like? Of course not! They need help.

Since your spouse's most significant responsibility is to love you well, one of the best ways you can love them is to help them do just that. Speak the truth in love regarding how you desire to be loved. Tell them what you like and what you don't. Don't make them read your mind.

Habit #4: Say, “I Feel”

Transparency is the key to intimacy.

The goal of marriage is to become “one flesh” physically, emotionally, and spiritually (Mark 10:7-8). Physical one flesh happens with sex. Spiritual one flesh starts at the altar and continues as a husband and wife grow closer to God. Emotional one flesh is experienced when a couple has transparent communication with each other.

The goal of communication should be to know each other and be known by each other...completely. This looks like creating an environment where you and your spouse both feel comfortable and secure sharing how you feel about all areas of life.

Be willing to share how you feel with your spouse. Also, be willing to listen to how your spouse feels. Pursue complete transparency in all of your communication.

Habit #5: Say, “I Pray”

Couples who pray together, stay together.

When Star and I introduce ourselves at the beginning of our marriage conferences, I frequently say something to the effect of, “When Star and I first got married we were 19 and 20. We didn’t know the first thing about marriage!” In a recent interview, we were asked what we meant by that. Looking back, the biggest thing we didn’t understand about marriage is how foundational it is to put Christ at the center.

The most significant thing you can do

for your marriage is invite God to be a part of it. The best way to do this is to start praying together. Confess to God that you need Him. Thank God for your marriage. Ask Him for strength, wisdom, and protection.

This doesn’t have to look like spending 30 minutes on your knees with your spouse, but it should be a habit that you commit to grow in starting today. I know this is intimidating for many couples, but my encouragement is to start small and start today.

“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain.”

Psalm 127:1

Funny How...

Funny how a \$100 “looks” so big when you take it to church, but so small when you take it to the mall.

Funny how long it takes to serve God for an hour, but how quickly a team plays 60 minutes of basketball.

Funny how long a couple of hours spent at church are, but how short they are when watching a movie.

Funny how we need 2 or 3 weeks advance notice to fit a church event into our schedule, but can adjust our schedule for other events at the last moment.

Funny how you can send a thousand ‘jokes’ through e-mail and they spread like wildfire, but when you start sending messages regarding the Lord, people think twice about sharing.

Testimony of Karl Yoder

In recent months, Karl Yoder contacted Pastor Ike. Some of you may know or remember Karl. At one time he was a member of OGBC. His contact with Pastor Ike resulted in the following letter which he shared with the church on March 4th. It reads...

Greetings to my brothers and sisters in Christ at the Orrville Grace Brethren Church; and peace to you all. May this letter find you all in an active striving with and for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I am writing in relation to an update from things that happened back in 1997. Jesus reached down and saved me from the penalty and power of sin on January 31, 1985, through the ministry of Pastor Keith Merriman. Time fails me to fill you in on all the details of what transpired in the months and years to follow, but as is our nature (our flesh is never saved) I fell back into worldly living. I started smoking marijuana again, and even started back into using harder drugs as well. I continued in this rebellion against the truth for years.

The elders from your congregation came and confronted me in the pattern consistent with biblical/church discipline. I chose the wrong path, leaving the OGBC and attending the Wooster GBC. That decision made it easier for my wife to pursue a divorce, even though there had been no sexual infidelity on my part. The head pastor at that time even met with me

and explained how it was in her best interest to sever the marriage, for her own peace of mind.

I continued in a self-medicating, "running-from-the-Lord" state of existence for years. When I turned 40, on or around my birthday, I made the decision to quit partaking in the "harder" drugs, not because I wanted to please the Lord, but simply driven by the sheer hatred of that life-style. I know it was only through the power of the Holy Spirit that I was able to quit abruptly without seeking any type of rehabilitation or counseling. Even though I wasn't living for the Lord, I still had the Holy Spirit's presence living in me which enabled me to say "enough is enough" and just quit.

However, it wasn't until August 2015 that I gave up smoking pot. I am not proud of that, but it is factual.

The purpose of this letter is to ask you, the Orrville Grace Brethren Church, and your elders to forgive me for my sin against you all. I also want to share with you all that I am no longer under the bondage of drugs and I am striving to live out my life to and for the Glory of God. I have a long way to go, but don't we all?! Your prayers are greatly needed and appreciated!

In His service,

Karl Yoder