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## **Time to Check up on your Marriage**

### **Radio Message by Dwight Porter, D.D.**

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For years I have communicated on the printed page, over radio and TV the lamentable happenings concerning marriage breakups. Separation and divorce (neither are in the Bible) are involving people in fundamental and evangelical circles as well as in all other areas of religion. All of us have heard recently of this action taken by Pastors and wives including missionaries as well as church leaders.

#### **Not Automatic**

The marriage problems, brought to me as a counselor, have been going on for years. They desire me to say or do the immediate magic trick to turn around their sour marriage of many years.

Two Christians getting married does not mean an automatic happy relationship. In all of my marriage counseling, I have found one fact to be true. A happy marriage does not begin at the church altar. I feel so sorry for young people who had no joyful fulfilled marriage example and demonstration in their childhood home. Mental attitudes of children are involved in their future happiness as married partners. Sunday School teachers, parents, youth workers, and Pastors dare not fail in the God-given task of teaching the Biblical truth of marriage. Love is a growing exercise. It does not remain status quo. It is growing or diminishing. It is a teaching process. "The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things, that THEY MAY TEACH the young women to be sober-minded, TO LOVE their husbands, TO LOVE their children" Titus 2:3, 4.

#### **Annual Check Up**

Some people are very conscientious about an annual physical checkup. They have a yearly appointment with the Internal Revenue Service. Car owners check carefully the factory recommended maintenance schedule. But when it comes to their marriage, it is allowed to drift along without an inventory, review or renewal of the vows made in the presence of God.

If children are not being trained properly in their home, how will their marriage standards become established? Such training must be by precept and example. "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" Prov. 22:6. Where will they turn for such counsel and advice? The filthy Hollywood movies? The TV soap operas? The couple in the next apartment? Their peers? God has given this responsibility to parents. Youth workers and pastors are to assist them.

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when

thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and thy gates. And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildest not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not, when thou shalt have eaten and be full" Deut. 6:6-11.

#### **Marital Counsel**

Will you dare to consider the following procedures for a meaningful appraisal of your marriage?

1. Choose a good time to reflect on your marriage. It should be at a quiet place with plenty of time involved and a long time after a misunderstanding or upset.
2. Take turns in reading the questions you have specially prepared for the occasion.
3. Realize the importance of these get togethers that can change you, your spouse and entire life together, not to mention the impact upon your children and service for the Lord.
4. Hold hands as you discuss your relationships. Always start with the joys and delights before moving into the disappointments and frustrations brought on by each other.
5. Be honest about admitting shortcomings. Give your partner hope by a commitment on your part to change that which annoys the other. Love freely makes such adjustments.
6. Agree on your priorities together. The way you are going to spend your time together. Investments of money and family relationships should be freely and openly discussed. Declare mutual decisions for specific changes, for better direction to the glory of God and the pleasure of each other. Determine, by the help of God, that no longer will you do anything to hurt or annoy each other.
7. Endeavor to deal with what is happening between you rather than to either one of you.
8. Be wide open with one another as to your reactions, feelings, etc. The knowledge of your spouse should indicate how far you should go in the disclosure of some misbehavior that might do more harm than good. Be absolutely honest in answering any questions.
9. Agree to review your relationship periodically or whenever one or the other request such an intimate conversation.
10. Invite the Holy Spirit to sharpen your understanding and soften your reactions. Be sure to pray together, naming the personal commitments you desire divine assistance to maintain.

### **Willing to Answer?**

The following questions come from my heart to yours. Usually it is the small irritations that grow into large ones. Some couples keep accurate records of their disappointments, never to forget them again. You are not that way, are you?

1. Is there something missing in your relationship that you feel is necessary? Are you sure your unmet need is worthy of your spouse's attention? After doing your best to supply all needs, mention yours to him or her. Need more affection? Why not show more yourself? It might be returned to you.
2. Do you feel wanted, loved, and appreciated? Far more important, does your mate have these same needs? Remember you can more easily meet his or her needs. Upon realizing them, get busy. The happiness and the needs of the other person are of greater importance. Keep your eyes off of yourself.
3. Do you both find mutual satisfaction in your physical expression of sex? Are you both satisfied with the frequency? Both fulfilled and happy in such an intimate relationship? If not, why not? Your body as a Christian belongs to two persons and you are not one of them. First to God (I Cor. 6:19, 20) and to your husband or wife. (I Cor. 7:2-5). Sex is the most twisted overrated relationship in this world. Of course it is God's plan and is beautiful and rewarding to the married couple who are pleasing each other.
4. Are you using money, sex, employment, etc. in your relationship? Are these the weapons used to get your own way? Do you use them to express hostility, control, anger, revenge or other hidden feelings? Love does not withhold, keep grudges, etc. You should share money and all possessions. Stop the his and hers routine immediately.
5. Does your spouse receive from you more commendations than condemnations? The partner who hears more positive than negative statements can take a few negatives now and then. Nagging and "I told you so's" belong in the abnormal TV situation comedies.
6. Do you spend with delight leisure time with your spouse? Have you matured enough to leave the boys play their childish games without you? Business can ruin meaningful togetherness. Remember, it must be planned and provided for. Be cautious that you do not demand too much of one another's time and energy. Work and solitude are very important to everyone. Plan a few days "away from it all" occasionally. Christ recognized this need as stated in Mark 6:31. "And he said unto them, Come aside into a desert place, and rest a while; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat."
7. Do you settle disagreements and irritations with mutual satisfaction? Do not be immature in your attitude about losing an argument with a display of bitterness and holding a grudge. Of course you will have differences.

Are your ground rules established ahead of time? Let me suggest a few for you. No name calling—no physical force—stick to the subject—no introductions of additional wrongs for what has happened in the past—no hitting below the belt—no anger is to remain after one hour from the discussion whether you won or lost—we do not have to have a final decision as to who is right, for both learn from the discussion.

8. Is your time properly balanced? Are you spending sufficient time at home to accomplish the honey do jobs around the house? I am referring to the request from the wife, "Honey will you do this or that?" How much time have you set aside each day for personal fellowship with your children and total family participation?
9. What about the management of your home? Are the household chores divided among all the members of your family? Your home should not revolve around the children. They must fit in as individual members. We are to help one another. This loving concern is to be taught in YOUR home.
10. Are either of your living dangerously with someone else? The beginning of an affair is a little more time and a bit more sparkle with an understanding friend of the opposite sex. The amount of this time spent tends to increase almost unconsciously a foundation for further involvement. Stop such relationship immediately. The treatment of your spouse will never be a reason for infidelity in God's book.
11. Do you set aside a definite time for your personal devotions and also for your family? How often do the two of you get down on your knees and pour out your heart to God in prayer? Prayer and bickering will not go together. Mutual dependence upon God binds two people together in goals, purposes and accomplishments.
12. Is your marriage next to the most important relationship on this earth? (Number one in your intimacy with God through Jesus Christ, His Son. This is maintained by prayer and Bible study). Are you working the hardest for your marriage? Your children will reproduce the home they have left. Their attitude is determined by parents. NO other responsibility comes near marriage. How hard are you working at it? Your spouse's labors will never relieve you of this God-given top priority.

God can make you the husband or wife He has portrayed in His word. You can't make it without His assistance. Be sure to answer honestly these 12 questions. Why not answer them together as husband and wife?

Biblical directions: Ephesians 5:21-33, Ephesians 6:1-6, Colossians 3:16-21.

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