

MID-LIFE MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT PART 4
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LESSON 4

Marriage is an investment that pays dividends if you pay interest. It takes an investment of time and creative effort to make marriage a growing experience. You have got to stop showing your worst side to your better half.

The homework was fun and gave us a choice. If we like the new we could choose it, or if we prefer we could go back to the old way of doing things. Not all change is good, but you have to try new things to discover if there is a better more satisfying way of doing things. You may just discover you already have found the best. We learn by going to different places to eat that the old places are the best after all. You do not have to be coin collectors to be looking for change.

*Lets discuss selfishness. Evaluate your relationship to your mate and describe who of the two of you is the most likely to be selfish, and demand their own way. In all honesty I have to admit I am the most selfish. I enjoy having my own way and I enjoy Lavonne enjoying giving me my own way. For years she devoted herself to typing and indexing for me, and her time was dedicated to my goals. Middle age has brought change. She has gotten more independent, and decided she had some things she would rather do for herself. I do not resent it even though things pile up I want done, but because of her independence she has gotten almost as selfish as me. This is a change we have adjusted to without a crisis. I am grateful for her years as my slave, and now I accept her as a partner with her own agenda.

HOMEWORK

Phil 2:2-4 Play slave for a day, or Pleasant peasant. Each of you select a day that is your day, and your mate is to cater to your interests only, and deny themselves for you. You select the form of the activity and entertainment, or the project to be worked on. A minimum of two hours must be spent in this way.

C.S. Lewis in Mere Christianity wrote, "The idea that being in love is the only reason for remaining married really leaves no room for marriage as a contract or promise at all...If love is the whole thing, then the promise can add nothing, and if it adds nothing, then it should not be made...and, of course, the promise, made when I am in love and because I am in love, to be true to the beloved as long as I live, commits one to things true even I cease to be in love. A promise must be about things that I can do, about actions: no one can promise to go on feeling in a certain way. He might as well promise never to have a headache or always to feel hungry."

You cannot promise to feel loving, but you can promise to act loving, and action becomes the basis for feeling. Many a time I have had no feeling about going to the mission to preach, but I go and do it and out of that action of duty I feel uplifted and glad I went because of the response. Actions lead to feelings. "It is easier to act your way into feeling than it is to feel your way into action," someone once said. Choose to act loving and you will feel loving.

Act As If Therapy. It is a proven fact that if you act as if you enjoyed something, even when you don't, you can actually come to enjoy it. So pretend to like something your mate wants to do, and this pretense can lead to the reality of liking it. You can shout at your mate stop being selfish, but this is like

saying stop being tall, or white, or American. You can't achieve change all in one jump. It takes time and pretence to do it. Make small changes and move toward the goal by steps, and reward each small change. Couples in conflict make bold demands for immediate and rapid change, and it does not work. Change is not to be an event, but a process. Ask-

1. Where would you like to be?
2. What steps are needed to get there?
3. Where do we start?

BIBLE TEXTS AND MARRIAGE TO STUDY.

1. Acts 20:35 This was Paul and Nelli Tournier's wedding text. Paul feels the unselfish giving of one's time and support and love is one of the keys to a good marriage. Everything is shared. The interests and disappointments, the victories and defeats, the worries etc. Self-centered demands hurt marriage, but giving makes it grow. Nothing is hidden but mates share everything with each other.

2. Luke 6:38 Margaret Hess, "A marriage equals only the sum of what two people put into it. If each plans on taking all he can get, giving as little as he can get by with, the emotional bank account will soon go into the red. The marriage will sooner or later go out of business. Each must work at adding to the emotional bank account." Giving is the difference between failure and success. We can give strokes that make our mate feel appreciated. We can give compliments, and small courtesies, and words of encouragement. Give your mate the impression that they are loved and wanted. Charlie Shedd gives a compliment a day to his wife and recommends it to all.

3. Matt. 20:25-28 The motive is often to abuse power and get all you can out of your mate, but the goal of Jesus is to be a servant, and He wants you to give all you can to your mate. Are you a servant to your mate? Power is to be shared and not hoarded and abused. The greater the power the greater the opportunity to serve.

I know if Lavonne had not resisted my power and selfishness I would be less loving, and I would have missed out on much of the joy of marriage. She has helped me to avoid being totally self-centered.

Bargaining and compromise are keys to marriage. God will do this with his power as he did with Abraham in Gen. 13:5-12. God honors the man who shares his power and makes compromise for his benefit. The husband has a right to share his power with his wife. Power gives rights and love shares rights. A man had the right to demand payment, but he also had the choice to show love-Matt. 18:23-35. We are to share power in marriage and have a mutual submission as in Eph. 5:21. Both then feel like partners and there is no need for resentment to develop.