

FROM ME TO WE

KEYS FOR BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

LESSON 3 // MAKING MARRIAGE WORK—PART 2

Any two people coming together over a period of time will inevitably hit storms in their relationship. It's only a certain intentional process that causes relationships, including marriage, to normalize and begin working in positive, productive ways.

Jesus taught us about the intentional ingredient that makes a marriage work:

Matthew 19:4-6 (NIV) *"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."*

"Becoming" is a process and in marriage, "becoming one" is an intentional process that both people have a responsibility to contribute to and make happen. In short, marriage only works when we work toward a very specific goal of "becoming one." In our last lesson, we focused on one key point to making marriage work: bringing God into your marriage. Let's look at two more keys in this lesson:

1. Dismiss the myths.

What are some of the most common myths about marriage that need to be permanently dismissed and deleted from our thinking?

- Marriages are made in heaven.
- Marriage will make me happy.
- Marriage will make me whole.
- People miraculously improve the moment they say, "I do."
- My primary job in marriage is to improve/change my spouse.
- Great marriages never have problems or conflicts.
- Marriage will take care of my loneliness.
- My spouse should always know my needs and meet them.
- Having children will make our marriage better.
- Physical appearance doesn't matter after marriage.
- Love is all I need.
- Communication and intimacy should be spontaneous.
- Living together before marriage is a good idea.
- Marriage preparation is a waste of time—"We are in love!"
- My past doesn't affect me, or my past will always haunt me.
- Men can't understand women, and women can't understand men.
- If marriage doesn't satisfy me, I'll leave.

All these statements are false. They are all myths. But many of us, consciously or unconsciously, accept them as true. We need to have our minds totally renewed about marriage so that we dispel these myths and believe the truth of God's Word.

Romans 12:2 (NLT) *Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

2. Count the cost.

Jesus gave us an important lesson in what's required to build or win at anything in life, including marriage: we need to count the cost.

Luke 14:28-33 (NIV) *Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, ³⁰ saying, "This person began to build and wasn't able to finish." ³¹ Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. ³³ In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples."*

Once we dismiss the myths about marriage, our next step is to count the cost—to go “all in” to our marriage with commitment. How do you commit to your marriage?

- Remove the “escape” thoughts, clauses and conversations.
- Remove the influence of anything draining your attention or affection.
- Remember your vows.
- Elevate commitment over emotions.
- Adjust your attitudes about relationship problems that arise.
- Identify and adopt a common goal—teamwork.
- Demonstrate your commitment through investment.
- Communicate your commitment in words.

Count the cost and pay the price of marriage—commitment. A renewal of commitment could be the one thing that starts you on the road to a renewed, healed relationship!

Discussion questions

1. Read Romans 12:1, 2. What are some myths about marriage you need to dispel from your thinking? How can God's Word help renew your mind about this and replace it with truth?
2. Read Luke 14:28-33. What do you learn from these verses that applies to marriage and all your relationships? What difference should this make in your relationships?
3. Look again at the points about commitment in marriage (many of which also apply to all your important relationships). Which of these is most challenging for you? How can you grow stronger in fulfilling this and improving your relationships?