

Spiritual Tip

Call it Like You See It

By Joel Osteen

You might have heard the story of how my father and mother started Lakewood Church in 1959 in an old, rundown, abandoned feed store. They had 90 members. A few years later, my father named the church, Lakewood International Outreach Center. He put a big blue sign out front. The sign cost more than the building. The truth is, they were not an international outreach center. They were a small neighborhood church with 90 people. But when my father drove up to that building and saw that sign, his vision was being increased. He was moving toward it. Every week when those 90 members saw that sign again and again, something was being birthed on the inside. Seeds of increase were taking root. Do you know what Lakewood is today? An international outreach center, touching the world! He called it like he saw it in the spirit, and it came into being.

Growing up, my father always kept a globe on his desk at home. At the old church, there was a big world map on the wall. Daddy had a globe behind him when he spoke. He always had the world on his mind. At one conference, people came from 150 different countries—it looked like the United Nations! What am I saying? What you keep in front of you, you are moving toward. Now let me challenge you: Don't have a small vision for your life. You are not inconveniencing God by believing big. In fact, it's just the opposite. When you believe to do something great, when you believe to set a new standard for your family, when you take the limits off of God and say, "God, I don't see a way, but I know You have a way, so I'm going to believe You in spite of my circumstances," that's faith that pleases God.

My father could have put on that sign, Lakewood Community Church. There's nothing wrong with that. But God had placed something bigger in his heart. He could have just looked at the circumstances. We're just 90 people. We've got this old rundown building. We don't have any influence, any connections. We'll never do anything great. If he would have thought that, we wouldn't be here today.

Remember, it doesn't matter what things look like in the natural, we serve a supernatural God. He is not limited by your resources, your education, your background or your nationality. And if you will keep a big vision in front of you, God will not only do what you're dreaming about, but He'll supersize it. He'll do more than you can ask or think! Call it like you see it and watch His faithfulness bring to pass every dream and desire in your heart!

"You will also decree a thing, and it will be established for you; and light will shine on your ways." (Job 22:28, NASB)

Parenting Tip

Getting On The Same Page With Your Spouse

By John Rosemond

"How can my spouse and I get on the same page where the kids are concerned?" is both the most difficult question parents ask me and also the most important. It is the most difficult because each of the parents in question thinks the problem lies with the other, and as long as they cling to that security blanket, the problem cannot be solved. It is the most important question because the strength of a family, and therefore the well-being of its children, depends fundamentally on the parents being in a state of unity.

Fifty-plus years ago, it was rare for parents to have significant disagreement concerning children. Today, the problem is almost everywhere. And it is at the root of many if not most parenting problems. Solve that and everything will begin to fall into place rather quickly and easily.

Paradoxically, however, the "parents on two different pages" problem won't be solved by communicating more about the kids, being more willing to compromise on matters of discipline, and respecting one another's different expectations and goals concerning the kids will not solve it. In other words, parents who are not on the same parenting page will not get on the same page by regarding and treating their differences as a parenting problem. It's a marital problem.

The problem exists because the two people in question, when they began having kids, slowly abandoned the roles of husband and wife. This happened over the span of several years, so like the proverbial frog in water that's being slowly heated to boiling, they accustomed themselves to it. Eventually, not really being truly married became a habit. At this point, they're in a state of denial. They say they're married, but they're not. They are a mother and a father. Those roles do not define a marriage; they define biology.

Correcting the problem, therefore, requires that new habits be substituted for existing ones. The new habits involve paying more attention to one another than to the kids, doing more for one another than for the kids, talking more to one another than to the kids, and so on. They should even strive to not talk much about the kids at all. They should work at having adult conversations about adult things.

A healthy, vibrant marriage consists to two people who are attuned to one another and who serve one another; two people who are willing to sublimate their almighty and most narcissistic selves to the betterment of the union. This is done by simply asking "What can I do for you?" It is done through humility, submission, and other things that, unfortunately, are no longer part of our national vocabulary.

Paying more attention to and doing more for one's spouse requires paying less attention to and doing less for the kids. But that will be easy, because when children see a marriage coming back together, they ask for less attention. This happens naturally. They begin to relax. They begin doing their own thing, letting you do yours.

And before you know it, you're on the same page, but the likelihood is that this same page will be different from either of the separate pages you once occupied. And the kids will approve, believe me.

Marriage Tip

Women: Five Reasons Your Divorce Is Your Fault

By Laura Doyle

I teach intimacy skills, but not to couples and not to men. I only teach them to women because we are the ones who have the power to make our relationships intimate. When a woman learns intimacy skills, her relationship becomes passionate and peaceful in about two weeks. Clients often say, "I feel like I have a new husband." But he's not the one who changed -- she did, and then he responds to her differently.

That's how it always is when a woman has a good guy. Of course, not all guys are good guys. If your husband is actively addicted to drugs, alcohol or gambling, or is physically abusive, or not capable of being faithful, yours is a divorce I endorse. Safety comes first and you're not safe in those situations because his compulsion will always come before you.

But if he doesn't fall into one of those categories, he's a good guy -- not a perfect guy, but one you can have a wonderful relationship with when you learn the skills that contribute to intimacy.

Below are five ways that women unwittingly sabotage their marriages, along with the proven remedies for restoring the love and closeness you once shared.

1. Rejecting his efforts to make you happy

Husbands and wives bring different strengths and desires to marriage. For women, feeling cherished and desired is vital. For a man, respect and sex are of utmost importance. Men also have a

powerful drive to make their wives happy -- it contributes to their feeling of success.

You might think that your husband is the exception -- that he doesn't care about delighting you -- but he may just be discouraged because he doesn't feel that he can please you. You have the power to transform your relationship by becoming "pleasable", which means showing appreciation for his efforts instead of rejecting or dismissing them -- and by extension, him.

When you reject his efforts because they aren't what you had in mind (e.g., a present that isn't what you want, cleaning that's not to your standards, or a compliment you don't agree with), there's nothing he can do to improve the situation, but there is something powerful you can do: receive graciously.

Remedy: Try an experiment for the next two weeks: However small or imperfect his efforts, receive what your husband offers when he is trying to please or help you. Thank him for his thoughtfulness. Notice how quickly this creates more intimacy as you practice the skill of receiving graciously.

2. Taking the same approach at home as you do at work

We women can create a gratifying culture of intimacy, if we know how. If all we've ever been taught is how to get ahead in school and career, but not how to foster intimacy, it's pretty hard to change hats when the work day is done and we want a loving, supportive home.

At work we have to manage projects and staff, move the bottom line and get that promotion. At home the goals are different; we want to feel appreciated and wanted and get more help around the house. But if you treat your husband like an employee, he will rebel. Respecting

your husband by saying what you want instead of telling him what to do gives him the opportunity to make you happy in a way that no amount of managing ever will.

Remedy: For two weeks say what you want, but not what he should do or how he should do it. Be patient and allow him to find his own way of pleasing you. Remember, he wants to. Let him, and he will.

3. Withholding sex

Most men need sex more than women to feel intimate. You are his only source for that vital form of connecting, and when you withhold -- whether to punish or because you're exhausted -- you miss a chance to receive the intimacy that you both crave.

Remedy: Over the next two weeks as you start experiencing more intimacy, consider making yourself available for sex at least once a week in support of your mutual goal of connecting.

4. Initiating divorce when the problem isn't insurmountable

Women initiate between 66% and 90% of all divorces. You might think that's because men do things to make marriage untenable -- like cheat or hit them -- but I hear about women divorcing because he didn't help with the baby, he was emotionally unavailable, or because they grew apart. Countless women tell me they divorced because their husbands weren't capable of meeting their needs.

When the women I work with learn intimacy skills, it changes the way they see a previous marriage. Some women tell me that they realize they were married to a good guy, but divorced because they lacked the skills to have a happy

relationship. Sometimes it causes them enormous grief.

It is heartbreaking to see marriages end because of a simple lack of skills. It's no different than seeing someone try to drive a car without a single lesson: A crash is inevitable, but it's preventable.

Remedy: Consider taking divorce off the table just for the next two weeks, keeping in mind that intimacy needs safety to thrive. In my experience, any woman who has a good guy can bring her marriage back from the brink of divorce and transform it into a happy, loving relationship by practicing the intimacy skills. You can do the same.

5. Waiting for him to improve

You might wonder why there's no article for men explaining what they can do to improve their marriages. Even if there was, you couldn't make your husband read it or do what it says. You can change yourself, and he will respond to you differently.

Remedy: Instead of pleading, criticizing or demanding that your husband change, try the remedies above for two weeks. To learn how, get the free 17-page e-book Six Lessons for Lasting Love at LauraDoyle.org

If you want peace in your marriage, then let it begin with you.

Compliments of the District 1 Marriage and Family Ministry, FFWPU

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