

Spiritual Tip

When Will You Ask For God's Help?

By Rick Warren

Once you admit that you need help, you can ask God for it! This is moving from confession to petition.

At one point in his life, the apostle Paul was so discouraged that he was ready to give up on life. In fact he said, "We felt we were doomed to die" (2 Corinthians 1:9 LB). Then he went on to say in the same verse, "We ... saw how powerless we were to help ourselves; but that was good, for then we put everything into the hands of God, who alone could save us, for he can even raise the dead."

If God can raise a dead person, he can raise a dead marriage. If God can raise a dead person, he can raise a dead career. If God can raise a dead person, he can raise a dead dream. Anybody can bring good out of good. God can bring good out of bad. He can do miracles! He specializes in turning crucifixions into resurrections.

But you've got to ask God for his help.

Notice that the verse says, "We put everything into the hands of God." Paul is talking about total surrender. It's not partial surrender where you say, "My finances are in a mess, so I'm going to give God my finances." You've got to give him all of your life! You've got to put everything in his hands.

Have you done this? Have you ever come to a point in your life where you've said, "Everything in my life — the good, the bad, the ugly, the rotten, the happy, the sad, the ups, the downs — I put it all in your hands."

Don't wait until you hit bottom. Sometimes we're so obstinate God has to lay us flat on our back to make us look up to him. There's an easy way and a hard way to do this. The easy way to change is to see the light. The hard way is to feel the heat. The problem is most of us rarely change until our fear of change is exceeded by the pain. Then when the pain gets so great we go, "Oh, I've got to get help!" Don't get to that place where everything has to drop out in your life for you to admit you need help.

Just go to God and ask him for help.

"You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule" (Matthew 5:3 MSG).

Talk It Over

- In what areas have you given God partial surrender of your life?
- Why do you think God wants you to ask him for help when he already knows what you need?
- How can you make less of yourself so that there is more room for God (Matthew 5:3)?

Parenting Tip

No. 75

Five Signs Your Family is Healthy

By Dr. Gary Chapman

Most people would like their families to improve. There are five basic characteristics of a loving family - five elements that, if they are in place, will create healthy family dynamics.

1. An Attitude of Service

A healthy family has an attitude of service to each other and to the world outside the walls of the family. Read the biographies of men and women who have lived lives of sacrificial service to others, and you will find that most of them grew up in families that nurtured the idea of service as virtuous.

2. Intimacy between Husband and Wife

The sharing of the inner self is the fabric from which we weave marital intimacy. It satisfies the inner longings of the couple, and, if children are in the family, it serves as the best positive model of what family is all about.

3. Parents Who Teach and Train

Some parents are strong on teaching - they want to answer the "why" questions for children. Other parents emphasize training - their motto is "Actions speak louder than words." In a loving family, parents balance teaching and training. Parents see them as companion tools, not exclusive methods.

4. Children Who Obey and Honor Parents

In a functional family, parental authority is used for the benefit of the children. They espouse the virtues of kindness, love, honesty, forgiveness, integrity, hard work, and treating others with respect. Children who obey this kind of parent will reap the benefit of living under wholesome authority.

5. Husbands Who are Loving Leaders

Male leadership expresses itself in two relationships in the family: husband and father. Being both loving and a leader is a unique combination, but it's an important ingredient of a healthy family.

To find out more about Dr. Chapman's resources, visit www.fivelovelanguages.com.

Marriage Tip

Three Mistakes Martians Commonly Make

By Dr. John Gray

The scene: She is upset and comes to him and begins to talk about it. He really does want to help her be happy again, but he feels virtually helpless in the world of a woman's emotions.

To his dismay, not only did it not help but she feels even worse! Over a period of time, he becomes more and more frustrated and concludes that, no matter what he does, he cannot make her happy. She concludes that she cannot count on him when she is down.

This scene plays itself out with maddening regularity in households around the world.

Over time, the relationship cools off and there is more and more distance between them. This can ultimately have tragic consequences.

So what is going on? It turns out that, in his attempt to help, he often gives her exactly the opposite of what she wants or needs. Instead of being helped, she experiences being invalidated and thus feels worse.

While both have their part in this, we will focus on the three common mistakes that men make in this kind of situation and how to overcome these mistakes.

The First Mistake that Men Make:

Men take it personally and defend themselves. How many times have you heard her say, "Why do you always have to make this about you? I'm just talking about how I feel!"

Martians (men) tend to fall headlong into this trap. The problem here is that men hear things literally. What they don't realize is that when she is upset, she will use words as tools to explore and express her difficult emotions. By doing so, she is able to process her upset and let it go.

The Second Mistake that Men Make:

The second Martian mistake is to try to minimize her feelings or talk her out of having them. My favorite with my wife used to be, "You're making a mountain out of a mole hill; it's not that big of a deal."

No doubt every Venusian reading this can tell you that that response has just the opposite of its intended effect. Instead of being relieved to see things from my vast, wise perspective, she experiences her feelings (and therefore she) are being invalidated, adding to her frustration and upset.

The Third Mistake that Men Make:

Finally, because Martians value competence, action and results, when a Venusian is upset,

Martians put on their Mr. Fix-It hats and ride in with "helpful" suggestions about how to make her situation better.

Martians, if you hear yourself about to say, "Why don't you just..." and follow it with a helpful suggestion or two... that is a good time to bite your tongue!

Once again, her experience is one of being discounted and invalidated.

So what can men do instead?

Here are some specific suggestions that men can add to their toolbox for dealing with these difficult situations:

- First and foremost, a man must realize that they come from different planets. What would be helpful to him will often have the opposite effect on her.

When she is upset, what she usually needs most from him is for him to listen, understand, and care about how she feels. This enables her to talk it through and release the upset.

- A helpful tool for preparing to do so is to say to yourself, "This is about her, not about me. All she needs is to talk it through and she will feel better. It will be particularly helpful if I hang in there with her and be a good listener."

- Men will often say (and feel) that if they are "just listening", then for them they are not doing anything of value. What men need to know here is that listening to her with interest, curiosity, understanding and compassion is doing something. It is also exactly what she needs.

Women will pay therapists big money to do for them what they are not receiving at home: listening.

If men invest time, energy, and practice to become a good listener for their wife or partner, it will pay handsome returns in her gratitude and appreciation.

Compliments of the District 1 Marriage and Family Ministry, FFWPU

For more:
Marriage Tips, Resources, or copies of these Sunday Inserts visit:

www.TheMarriageLibrary.com

Archives: username: Member
password: 20112011