



Reshuffled Priorities

Film

How do you keep your spouse, family, and friends happy at the same time? Is this even possible?

Teaching

Perhaps one of the earliest & toughest trials newlyweds face in marriage is getting their priorities right. As a single person, it was easy to come and go as you wished, and to spend as much time as you wanted with the people you wanted to be around. However, marriage introduces priority pressures that a single person cannot really fathom before getting married.

Priority pressures range from how much time to spend with one's spouse, family, friends, and even the spouse's family and friends. Throw in work, and perhaps children if this is a remarriage, then you've got a big challenge on your hands.

The following strategies can help spouses navigate around these land mines:

- Understand that your spouse is your first, new priority.
- Ensure that your spouse is getting the best of your time.
- Honor your parents and in-laws, but put your spouse first.
- With your spouse's input, make time in your schedule for recreation and time with friends.
- Tend to your children and spend time with them, but not at the expense of your marriage.

While these strategies can be helpful, they still require a willingness on your part to honor your spouse, and keep him/her first place in your heart and schedule after God. This can be extremely challenging for remarried couples who believe their children should come first. This is very understandable due to the fact that your children have a blood relation and have been with you through the dark periods of your former marriage. Still, research and observation have shown that remarried couples who build a strong marriage are better able to build a new, combined family, and provide parental guidance to their children.

Call to Action/Homework

Getting married changes the game drastically when it comes to how you spend your time, and whom you spend it with. For the health of your marriage, aim to put your spouse first after God, and continue to build your other relationships and obligations around that relationship. Talk with your spouse about your individual priorities, and together come up with guidelines that make you both feel honored, and free to spend time with family and friends.

Discussion

1. Which strategies have you already embraced regarding reshuffling your priorities?
2. What activities and/or relationships you need to reshuffle based on this lesson?



Getting Off To a Good Start

Film

Should newlyweds continue to hang out with single friends? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Teaching

The first one thousand miles are arguably the most important in the life of a new vehicle. How the vehicle is driven and serviced initially sets the tone for how it will operate later down the road as its miles add up. The same is true for a new marriage.

Author David Mace says that the shape of a marriage develops in the first six or twelve months. During this time, “couples develop habits of behaving toward one another that become settled and are not easily changed later.”

This is known as the “wet cement” stage of marriage when every step and/or imprint has the potential to become a lasting part of the marriage that will be seen years from now if not addressed immediately. For this reason, it’s key that newlyweds get off to a good start in their marriage.

Getting off to a good start is a vast topic, but there are some general guidelines that can assist:

- Talk early and often, with no subject being barred. Talk about sexual appetites, habits, and fantasies; in-laws; time; money; child-bearing and rearing; faith, community involvement; politics; friends; where you’ll spend holidays; communication habits; irritations; vocations; passions; time use, cleanliness, and any other day-to-day topic that has the potential to cause conflict or disagreements.
- Establish patterns of how you’ll use your time with each other and others.
- Design a regimen that puts Christ first, and one another second.
- Learn as much as you can about each other so you can live in an understanding way.

Marriage can be an exciting journey that takes two people through twists and turns over a period of many years. For it to be successful, however, it is imperative that couples get off to a good start so they can build upon successes instead of frustrations.

Call to Action/Homework

Commit to having genuine conversations with your mate, and learning as much about yourself and your mate as you can (considering using this personal [history questionnaire](#)).

Discussion



1. Why are newlyweds reluctant to have tough conversations at the beginning of their marriage?
2. If you've been married for at least five years, name a tough conversation you had early in your marriage that you're now glad you had?



The Selfishness Syndrome

Film

At what point does needing space to kick back and relax become selfishness?

Teaching

Perhaps the biggest obstacle married persons have to overcome is selfishness. Author Oscar Wilde described selfishness as wanting others to live the way you want them to live. There is much truth to this. One of the hallmarks of selfishness in marriage is one spouse doing what he/she wills with no regard to the feelings of the other spouse, *then* expecting the spouse to quietly and happily comply with the plan as if it were mutually created. This is the height of selfishness.

Because selfishness is rooted in our sinful nature, it can only be conquered through God's grace (ability). Philippians 2:3-5 says, "Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had."

Jesus overcame the selfish tendencies that tempted him by giving up divine privileges, and humbling himself in obedience to God. For spouses, this looks like *voluntarily* giving up whatever "privileges" you think come along with being a husband or wife, humbling yourself, and serving God and your spouse.

Note two things: this is not reserved for just one spouse, and is not necessarily "fair." Welcome to marriage! A marriage relationship blossoms when both spouses recognize and accept that they both have to sacrifice and serve one another. This is supported by Romans 12:10, which encourages Christ-followers to "outdo one another" in showing honor. To eliminate selfishness in your marriage, you must be committed to giving up privileges you believe you're due, humble yourself before God and your mate, and seek in the interest of your mate.

Call to Action/Homework

Selfishness is a cancer in marriage, so you must constantly be on guard against it. Consider ways you're possibly being selfish, and ask your mate if he/she agrees.

Discussion

1. Why do we tend to excuse selfishness in ourselves, but point it out in others?
2. What, if anything, are you continually doing in your marriage that seems "unfair" to you, but is essential to making your marriage work?