



The Most Important Bible Passage for Your Marriage

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July 29, 2012

AM Assembly



Introduction:

Do you want a happy marriage? I know you do. Did you know, there is one Bible passage that, when followed, will provide you happiness in marriage? If you follow this verse, never again will your wife accuse you of not loving her. Never again will your husband accuse you of not supporting and respecting him. Your wife will never again accuse you of irresponsibility. Your husband will never again accuse you of being a nag. Your wife will never again have trouble submitting to your headship. Your husband will never again lord his authority. If you, as a couple, follow this verse, all of your needs will be fulfilled. All of your attainable desires will be accomplished. All of your realizable goals will be attained. Your home will be a place of peace and harmony. There will be no fights. There will be no screaming and hollering. There will be love and joy. I guarantee you that even now you have peace, harmony, and joy in your home to the extent that you have already been living according to this passage, whether consciously or unconsciously. Did you know that such a passage exists? Do you know what it is? It is not **Ephesians 5:22-33**. It is not **Colossians 3:18-19**. These verses are important, but will only be followed when you first have this most important passage imprinted on your mind and live by it day and night. It is a passage you have probably never considered to be a passage about marriage. It is **Philippians 2:3-4**. "*Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others*" (ESV). You have heard sermons before about how this passage governs relationships with our brethren. If we ought to treat our brethren in this manner, how much more should we treat the one to whom we have vowed our lives and devotion?

Discussion:

I. How does this passage apply to marriage?

A. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit.

1. The KJV says do nothing from strife or vainglory. According to Strong's Enhanced Lexicon, the word translated "strife" or "rivalry" was used by Aristotle to denote "a self-seeking pursuit of political office." It is a desire to put one's self forward.
2. In marriage, this "rivalry" happens in the relationship itself as husband and wife argue about who works more, whose job is harder, who has had the worse day. Sometimes it happens when couples argue about who provides more benefit to the family. Sometimes it happens when spouses proclaim who sacrifices more.
3. A lot of times this comes not in the marriage relationship itself, but in how the spouses talk to others about the marriage relationship. Wives let their girlfriends know about how awful their husband is to them. Husbands constantly complain to "the guys" about their wives' latest problems. Each spouse lets their friends know, "I know I do some things wrong too, but my spouse does _____." While lip service has been paid to their faults, the whole point is to put self forward as the better one.
4. This selfishness is seen when partners do not try to actually serve one another but want to follow some manipulative technique in order to accomplish their own desires.
5. In marriage, you must do nothing from this mindset of political, manipulative maneuvering to accomplish your own desires. You must not have a mindset that is focused on your glory and all that you provide to the relationship. You must be focused on your spouse's importance and striving to accomplish what your spouse wants.

B. Let each regard the other as more significant than self.

1. This is the opposite of being governed by rivalry and conceit. Instead of viewing yourself as the one who is more important, who provides the most benefit, and therefore deserves more honor, you must look at your spouse in that light. Your spouse is more important, provides more benefit, and therefore deserves more honor and praise for their place in your family. You need to give it to them.
2. How do you accomplish this? By speaking words of praise and honor to them. By speaking words of honor and praise about them to others in your spouse's presence and when your spouse is not present. You can accomplish this by considering the things that are important to your spouse and make them important to you, which brings us to Paul's third point.

C. Look out for the interests of your spouse.

1. What things interest your spouse? What things are important to your spouse? You may not understand why it is so important to your spouse. You may not understand how anyone can be interested in that. But when you discover that something is important to your spouse, make it important to you.
2. Does your husband like to fish? Learn about fish and go fishing. Does your wife like to garden? Get out the tiller and plant some tomatoes. Is it important to your husband to pack his lunch? Then pack his lunch for him. Is it important to your wife that your drinking glasses are put in a certain cabinet? Then put them in that cabinet. Is it important to your wife that you call if you are going to be late? Then call her. Is it important to your husband that you give him a kiss when he comes through the door? Give him a kiss.
3. I could go through lists and lists of issues. And the important issues are different for each and every one of you. Maybe it is important to your spouse that you help out with his or her tasks or responsibilities. Maybe it is important to your spouse that you provide words of affirmation, praise, and honor. Maybe it is important to your spouse that you bestow gifts. Maybe it is important to your spouse that you spend quality time together. Maybe it is important to your spouse to show affection with a hug, a kiss, a shoulder rub, or even with sex. Whatever the case, no matter how great or small, make what is important to your spouse important to you.
4. I am convinced that this is the number one key to having happy, healthy marriages. And when both of you are doing this, everything that is important to you both will be accomplished. It is not easy. Because of different backgrounds, what is important to your spouse may not matter to you. In fact, I am sure that it makes absolutely no sense to you why your spouse gets excited, emotional, passionate, upset, angry, about the things he or she does. But those are the things to which you need pay attention. Those are the things upon which your spouse places importance. Make those things important to you and you will have a happy marriage. I guarantee it.

II. Why this accomplishes marital harmony.

A. **Philippians 2:3-4** replaces selfishness with service.

1. Jesus said, "The Son of man came not to be served but to serve" (**Matthew 20:28**). What a selfless attitude. This is the attitude that Paul used as an example in **Philippians 2:5ff**.
2. If your spouse replaced selfishness with service, wouldn't that make you happier? If your spouse were more selfless and less selfish, wouldn't it be easier for you to be a servant? Of course it would. Don't you think your spouse feels the same way about you? One of you has to start the cycle. Since this command is given to you, you be the one to do it.

B. **Philippians 2:3-4** provides understanding.

1. Have you ever heard the statement, "People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care"? This demonstrates the universal desire, perhaps need, to be understood. People want to know that you care about their feelings, their needs, and their desires. They want to know that you have taken the time to figure out what is happening in their lives and minds.
2. Sometimes spouses do not want an action or a reaction; they just want to see that you understand what is important to them. They just want to see that you understand where they are coming from. They just want to see that you understand why they are upset about something or happy about something else. They want to know that what they think or feel is valid and they are just as worthy a person as you are. When you are taking the time to uncover and discover what is important to your spouse, you are naturally going to provide that understanding for them.

C. **Philippians 2:3-4** grants significance.

1. No one wants to spend all his time doing something that is unimportant. We all want to be important, make a difference somewhere, be significant. One of the greatest things we can do in any relationship, especially the marriage, is to add significance to our spouses. To let them know they are important. They provide something important to the family. This is not just an ego-boost. This is a step that will increase their confidence in their work.
2. John Maxwell tells the following story in his book ***Developing the Leaders Around You***:

A member of my staff who was once dean of a vocational college told me of a day on which he was showing around a new employee. As he introduced each person and described each person's position, the receptionist overheard him say that hers was a very important position. The receptionist commented, "I'm not important. The most important thing I do each day is fill out a report."

“Without you,” the dean replied, “this school wouldn’t exist. Every new student who comes here talks to you first. If they don’t like you, they won’t like the school. If they don’t like the school, they won’t come to school here, and we would soon run out of students. We would have to close our doors.”

“Wow! I never thought of it that way,” she replied. The dean immediately saw her appear more confident, she sat up taller behind her desk as she answered the phone (pp 74-75).

3. When you demonstrate to your spouse that what they think is important and significant, you are demonstrating to them that they are important and significant. They will have more confidence in their role, taking pride in their part and being more willing to go the extra mile.

D. **Philippians 2:3-4** breeds trust and mercy.

1. You cannot understand **Philippians 2:3-4** without also reading **James 3:13-18**. This passage also discusses removing selfish ambition or strife. In contrast, it presents the several aspects of a relationship that will be present when you remove selfishness. We have already mentioned the peace and harmony. Notice the phrase “full of mercy.”
2. When **Philippians 2:3-4** governs your marriage, mercy will be present. We are naïve to think that in every step of the way we will always live perfectly according to **Philippians 2:3-4**. We will have lapses and sins within the marriage. But, when following **Philippians 2:3-4** has been the rule, your spouse will have a reserve of trust and mercy built up. They will be much more ready and able to forgive when you apologize.

E. **Philippians 2:3-4** stops hypocrisy.

1. Another point James makes in **James 3:17** is this course of action removes hypocrisy. The best way for me to make this point is to use myself as an example.
2. For the major part of our married life, I have been the one who controlled the finances. I’ve balanced the checkbook. I’ve paid the bills. I’ve decided when we could or could not spend money. Less than a year into our marriage, Marita was always mad because we never had money. However, the real issue wasn’t that we never had money. The real issue was because I was in control of the money, if I saw something as important, we had money for that. But, if something was important to her and not me, in my mind it was a waste of money, and since we didn’t have money to waste, we didn’t have enough money for it. The fact is, without realizing it, I was being a hypocrite. Because most of the things I felt were important to spend money on were, in reality, no more important than what she wanted to spend money on. I just had a different perception.
3. But, when we are striving to see what is important to others and making decisions based on that importance, the hypocrisy is removed. That doesn’t mean Marita and I are always spending money. That simply means it is easier to keep things on an even keel. This can apply to so many different aspects of the marriage relationship.

F. **Philippians 2:3-4** communicates love clearly.

1. Perhaps the most important reason for getting rid of your selfishness, viewing your spouse as more important, and seeking after what interests your spouse is this communicates love in the clearest way.
2. The fact is, we do not all communicate and perceive love in the same manner. For some spouses, you can tell them you love them all day long, and at the end of the day, they will tell you they think you don’t love them anymore. For some, you may rarely tell them, “I love you,” but if you wash the dishes or wash the car, they know you love them. We are different. And your spouse is probably different from you. So, you may spend your days spinning your wheels demonstrating love in the way that is important to you and they are not getting it. After a while, you just give up.
3. But, when you are taking the time to find out what is important to your spouse and making those things important to you, then you will naturally be communicating love in a clear way. If having a clean house is important to your spouse, then taking the time to dust, vacuum, or simply rinse out your glass after you have had a coke will demonstrate love. If being affectionate is important to your spouse, then stopping whatever you are doing when you see them in order to give them a kiss or a hug will demonstrate love. But, until you take the time to figure out what is important to your spouse, you will be spinning your wheels.

III. What not to do with **Philippians 2:3-4**.

- A. There are two things you must not do with **Philippians 2:3-4**. If you do these two things then far from bringing about a happy marriage, it will make your marriage worse.

- B. Don't use **Philippians 2:3-4** in order to manipulate your spouse. Your spouse can tell the difference between real loving devotion and you just trying to get something out of them. If you are somehow trying to get something out of your spouse and fake these points, they will know, and it will be meaningless. More than meaningless, it will drive a wedge between you that will be harder to overcome. Of course, allow me to be clear. If you have not been living according to this passage in your marriage and decide to start doing so, at first your spouse will probably think you are just trying to manipulate them. It will take a while to get past that. You must keep up your resolve to live by this passage; in time it will become clear.
- C. Secondly, don't use **Philippians 2:3-4** to attack your spouse's behavior. If you go home and start telling your spouse how they have not been living by this verse and they need to straighten up, then not only have you missed Paul's point, you will be actively destroying your marriage. Paul's point was not about what other people owe you in your relationships. It was about what you must give. Just so, this sermon is not about your spouse. This sermon is about you. If you do anything with this sermon, do not complain about all the times your spouse has not followed it. You apologize for all the times you have not followed it, no matter what your spouse has ever done. Then, make good on your apology and start following Paul's command in your marriage no matter how your spouse responds to this sermon.

Conclusion:

In following this passage, you will, no doubt, study other passages about your role in marriage as either the husband or the wife. But **Philippians 2:3-4** is the most important passage for your marriage. If you follow it, the other passages will fall into place in their proper perspective and emphasis. I guarantee it. Not because I am an expert on marriage, but because God is.