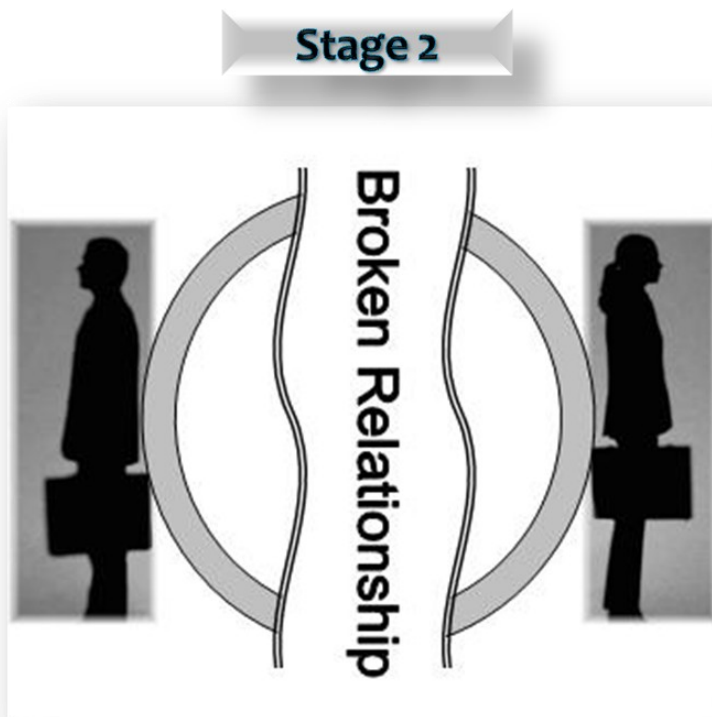


LIVING WELL IN MARRIAGE

The Non-biblical Way of Relating in Marriage (and in all relationships)

The Fall has affected the way we relate to others. The natural man looks to others like himself to meet his needs. Giving is based on the belief that we will get something we need from the person to whom we are giving. In marriage, each spouse gives out of his own means or out of what he receives from the other.



**Response of the Flesh
My needs aren't being met**

What goes wrong:

If one partner stops giving or doesn't give in the way the other wants, then the other partner does not receive. The cycle of giving and receiving stops and the relationship is broken.

Even if the relationship resumes temporarily, eventually it will break again as long as the couple is in this cycle of giving and receiving. One day, they say "We have just grown apart" or "We live separate lives" and the marriage has died.

This cycle creates isolation in marriage instead of oneness.

God never intended for your spouse to be able to meet all the needs of your life; he/she is not equipped or enabled to be able to meet your needs.

When you look to your spouse to meet those needs apart from God, the person has become your god – the Bible calls that devotion "idolatry."

Giving/Receiving of the Spirit-filled Person

God wants to use our closest relationships to make us like Him. In Ephesians 5:18-33, God commands us to be filled with His Spirit just before He teaches us about marriage.

It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we are able to give to our spouse even when they do not give to us.

We give out of what we receive from God. He is to be the One who meets our needs. The Bible never says to seek another person for love or any other need, but it does say to seek God.

But God does say that we need to have relationships with other people.

The need He has created in us to have a relationship with another person is the need to give. He created us to find joy and fulfillment in giving.



Relating One to Another in the Spirit-filled Life

God's design:

God created us to receive from Him, for Him to meet all the needs of our lives.

God has unconditional, unlimited, unending love for us.

Our part is to receive.

When you receive your love from Him, you can give in that same way to your spouse. Your giving is not dependent on what you get from him/her.

The proof of the principle:

Every parent loves their child beyond what they thought was possible from the moment they are born or while the child is still in the womb. The child has done nothing to meet the needs of the parent; the child has only caused physical pain and discomfort up to that point.

But the love for the child is based on what the parent **gives** to the child, not what he/she **gets**. Most parents have done much more to meet the needs of their children than the child does for the parent; yet the greater love and bond is for the child. The bond is from giving our love and meeting the needs of the child. The same can be true of marriage – the greater bond and love can come from giving rather than receiving.

Marriage is a picture of Christ's relationship with the church.

Ephesians 5:31-32: *As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.*

Jesus is the bridegroom, the church is the bride.

(Matthew 9:15, 25:1-13; John 3:29; Revelation 18:23; 21:2; 21: 9, 22:17)

God created us for intimacy with Him. After the Fall, our close relationship with God was broken and we began to go to other people to meet the needs of our lives instead of God.

The way we relate to our spouse reveals a lot about our relationship with God. Intimacy in marriage reflects intimacy with God.

We are to seek God for our needs. There are no verses in the Bible that say we are to seek out other people to meet the needs of our lives (Psalm 63:1-8; Psalm 84:2; Matthew 5:6; Matthew 6:33). John 4:14 - *but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.*"

Godly relationships are based on giving rather than receiving.

Luke 6:30, 38; Acts 20:35 *And I have been a constant example of how you can help those in need by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*"

God's guidelines for all relationships (including marriage) are found in the "*one another*" verses of the New Testament.

The **BIG THREE** of the "one anothers" are love one another, accept one another, forgive one another. If a couple can demonstrate these three principles in marriages, most issues are resolved. But each is shown after it has been received from God, out of the overflow of the heart.

1. "*As I loved you, so you must **love one another.***" John 13:34b

2. "**Accept one another** then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." Romans 15:7

3. "**Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**" Ephesians 4:32

To follow these "one another" passages, we must first receive from God, then we can give to others out of what we have received (Matthew 10:8; 1 John 4:19).

PERSONAL EXERCISE

1. What have you been seeking to receive from your spouse?
2. What needs are you hoping your spouse will fulfill in your life?
3. How can God fulfill that need in your life? What needs has He promised to meet?
4. Does God satisfy your life? Do you enjoy God? Why or why not?
5. What can you give to your spouse that you have received from God?
6. What would it look like for you to give without trying to get something in return?
7. How might this impact your spouse's life?

What difference would it make in your relationship?
8. Pray and ask God to fill you with an understanding of His love, His acceptance, and His forgiveness so that you can give these freely to those around you.
9. For each of the "one another" verses below, ask the Holy Spirit to show you specific ways you can demonstrate this attitude or characteristic to your spouse (children).
Example: What would it look like to show acceptance to your spouse?
10. Ask your spouse to share ways you can better express these character qualities to them.
11. Ask God to show you how your spouse is already showing these qualities to you.