

Tools for Wise Leadership

A programme of TWR-Africa, produced by TWR-Zimbabwe, presented by Rev Dr Roy Musasiwa

Series 13: Leadership Stewardship

Talk 06: Stewardship of Marriage Relationships

Welcome to the programme Tools for Wise Leadership.

We are focusing our attention on the issue of stewardship in Christian leaders. Stewardship is management of someone else's affairs or property. In this series we have been exploring the implications of this definition. We applied the principles of stewardships to the stewardship of our bodies and the stewardship of our minds and emotions. Today we more specifically apply the principles to the stewardship of marital relationships.

For those who are married the relationship with spouses must take centre stage over all other human relationships. As stewards we need to add value to our marriages. Marriage is the first human institution God created. If the marriage relationship suffers, all our other work as leaders is bound to suffer as well. That is why the devil is working overtime to destroy marriages through unresolved conflicts, marital unfaithfulness, neglect and domestic violence that comes in so many different forms. So we need to prioritize our marriages and add value to our marriages as stewards of this most important relationship.

And how do you add value to your marriage relationship? Gen 2:18-25 gives us 5 biblical pillars for strengthening marriage. The first is God must be being at the centre of marriage. Psalm 127:1 says "Unless the Lord builds the house those who build labour in vain." This applies particularly to marriage. Genesis 2 tells us that it is God who created marriage and has given us the Bible as his manual on how to make marriage work the way the creator intended it to work. It follows that God's thoughts about marriage as expressed in the Bible must prevail over cultural ideas, Western ideas or any philosophy. Moreover it has been demonstrated that a family that prays together, stays together.

Genesis 2 gives pillar number two as leaving without abandoning your family of origin. "For this reason" of marriage, it says, "a man shall leave his father and mother." Geographical, emotional and psychological leaving is necessary if we are to add value to our marriages. Geographical leaving means the two must set up their own home rather than a man bringing his wife into his parents' home where she can never have freedom to be her own self. So many mother-in-law and daughter-in-law problem emanate from this lack of geographical leaving. Emotional leaving means establishing a new centre of bonding, which of course must mean relaxing the bonding that existed with members of the family of origin. Psychological leaving means a couple being free to make their own decisions. Too often, even those who have geographically left continue to be subjected to remote controls. People who are married but maintain this long umbilical cord to their mothers will not prosper in their marriages. If the couple are to truly bond with one another they must leave father and mother, without of course abandoning them.

Pillar number 3 is closely associated with pillar number two. Leaving must be followed by cleaving. The man who has left father and mother must cleave to his wife. Without leaving there can be no cleaving. But there is no point in leaving without the cleaving. Cleaving means being glued together, like two pieces of paper strongly glued together. You cannot tear them apart without destroying both of them. That means when you are married you have to decide in advance that divorce is not even an option to be considered. It also means you develop strong love for one another that acts as the glue to the relationship. It must be glue made of a combination of agape love which is sacrificial and philia love where there is friendship. What ordinary friends do, a married couple should do even more of. Friends spend as much time together as possible. Friends speak

Tools for Wise Leadership, Series 13: Leadership Stewardship

affirming words to one another. Friends give each other gifts and help each other to do many things. These are the sort of acts of friendship that a married couple must demonstrate to one another.

So love is a great way for you to add value to your marriage. The Bible says faith, hope and love are the things that endure, but the greatest of these is love. I am particularly appealing to those of you who are husbands to love your wives. That is the wife's greatest need. Remember how Eve was created; not from the head to lord it over him, not from the feet to be trampled under by him; but from his side to be near him, near his heart to be loved by him, under his arm to be protected by him. A wife who is not loved soon gets into deviant behaviours like being attracted to other men who seem to accept her and appreciate her virtues. The wife, too, can add value to her marriage by submitting to her husband; but remember it is difficult for a wife to submit to a tyrant. But she would find it a pleasure to submit to a loving husband.

This leads us to marriage pillar number 4, which is oneness. After saying that the man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife it goes on to say that the two shall become one flesh. You add value to your marriage by being one in terms of sharing plans, sharing assets and sharing your bodies. When married people are in the same house yet live separate lives that is really contrary to God's intentions for marriage.

The final marriage pillar is that of transparency with one another. It says in Genesis 2 verse 25 that the man and his wife were both naked but were not ashamed. This means more than that they did not have clothes on. It also, and more significantly, means that they were completely transparent with one another. Marriages where people keep secrets from one another soon breed distrust. So let me ask you as a steward of this precious relationship called marriage. Are you transparent with one another? Do you know each other's history? Are you free to use each other's phone? It is rather unfortunate that cellphones have become a vehicle of many secrets, making so many people sensitive to their spouses even touching those phones.

Well our time is up, so let me just remind you of the five foundational pillars of marriage as found in Genesis 2:18-25. As a steward you need to add value to your marriage by ensuring that these pillars are firmly in place.

- Number 1: Put God at the centre of your marriage. Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build will be labouring in vain.
- Number 2: You need to leave but not to abandon your family of origin. Leaving should be geographical, emotional and psychological.
- Number 3: You need to cleave to your spouse, to be glued together with God's wholesome glue of agape and philia kinds of love.
- Number 4: You need to develop oneness, for the two shall become one flesh.
- Finally number 5: You need to be transparent with one another, because we are told that the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.

Now that you know these things you will be an exemplary steward if you put them into practice. Until I meet you in the next programme practice these tools of wise leadership.

Tools for Wise Leadership, Series 13: Leadership Stewardship

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