

## ***Marital Faithfulness***

A recent report revealed that "thirty-five percent of the people who use personal ads for dating are already married?" For years we've preached against and bemoaned the high rate of divorce in this country. But divorce doesn't just happen. There are any number of attitudes and actions that lead up to it. Wrong attitudes toward God, toward spouses, and toward the institution of marriage itself lead to foolish and harmful actions that destroy homes and condemn souls.

God created the institution of marriage. It is He who joins man and woman together in the bonds of matrimony, and He intends for them to stay that way until separated by death (Romans 7:2). Jesus said that man is not to separate what God has joined together (Matthew 19:6). In Malachi 2:16, God literally says that He "hates divorce." Any married person with an ounce of respect for God and His will, will not take out a personal ad for a date or engage in any other activity that could lead to a divorce. It's a matter of having the right attitude toward God.

It is also a matter of having the right attitude toward one's spouse. Spouses are to be loved, honored and cherished. A husband who is enraptured with the love of his spouse will not "be enraptured by an immoral woman" (Proverbs 5:19-20). He will honor his wife as the weaker vessel, and cherish her as he does his own flesh (1 Peter 3:7; Ephesians 5:28-29). The wife who loves her husband will "see that she respects" him (Ephesians 6:23). "An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, But she who causes shame is like rotteness in his bones" (Proverbs 12:4). This mutual love and respect between marriage partners leaves no room for activities which bring pain, shame and dishonor to one's spouse. Simply put, divorce and its painful consequences are often the result of being unfaithful to God and to one's spouse. Truly, "the way of the unfaithful is hard" (Proverbs 13:15, NKJV).

**- by Steve Klein**

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## ***Idleness***

We are all acquainted with an old adage which says, "An idle mind is the devil's workshop." It is possible for one to misuse his mind and it is possible for one to allow his mind to become disused. God condemns both. We frown exceedingly upon the person who misuses his mind by allowing it to be filled with lust, avarice, and hate, but we have failed to understand that disuse or idleness of the mind concerning the things of the Lord will bring "spiritual decay." I am told the following story which very graphically shows "disuse will result in decay."

Victorious Roman Legions, left behind to rule a defeated Spain, built an aqueduct in Segovia in AD 109. And for 1800 years - sixty generations - that aqueduct carried sparkling water to hot and dusty Segovians. About the turn of the twentieth century, thoughtful Spaniards decided the aqueduct should be preserved for posterity, and so should be relieved of its age-old labor. They laid modern pipelines and stopped the flow that for years had gushed and gurgled in the aqueduct. Shortly after, the aqueduct began to fall apart. The blazing sun dried the mortar and made it crumble. Its stones sagged and fell and soon it lay in ruins. What ages of SERVICE could not destroy, idleness rapidly disintegrated.

There are many people today who use their minds to dwell upon the very "rot" of the earth. Concerning such people, God expressed the following attitude in the long ago. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Gen 6:5-6). It grieves God to see His creation engaged in the distortion of their minds.

I believe it can be said with equal force that God is also grieved to see our minds lying idle in spiritual disuse. For this very reason Paul admonished. "Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them that thy profiting may appear to all" (1 Tim 4:15). And again, "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things (Phil 4:8).

May God help us all to study and meditate upon his Holy Word. And by all means remember: "Disuse Will Result in Decay."

**-by W.R. Jones**

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## ***Someone Is Always Watching***

It is not uncommon for children to look up to those who are older or wiser than they are. For this reason, little brothers and sisters will never cease to imitate their older siblings. These scenarios, however, are not exclusive to older and younger siblings or even younger or older people. The truth of the matter is that just as you and I look up to certain individuals, there are some looking to us for guidance and example.

If young people and new Christians do not have strong examples to follow as they test their wings, the chances of them growing into strong Christians decrease. It is our responsibility as Christians to help one another grow, and we can do a great deal by simply setting a good example. Many Christians do not feel confident enough to talk to someone about the Bible and, because of this, feel like they aren't doing what they should. If you are living in a way that is pleasing to God, you are reaching people. Though you may not always realize it, there is someone learning from you. If you are behaving in a way a Christian should, then those around you are getting a good message. If you are not living as you should, then those lessons, too, are being learned by those around you. We can be a great help to those who imitate us if we will do as Paul suggested to the Ephesians and "be imitators of God as dear children" (Eph. 5:1).

***- by Joshua Ellis***

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## ***A 'Sore Thumb'***

A familiar expression describes something that "sticks out like a sore thumb." The origin of that phrase is easily understood by anyone who ever had one! Everything you do, everywhere you go, the sore thumb seems to be the first thing that gets hit, smashed, jabbed or pinched - it really sticks out!

Sometimes we develop a spiritual "sore thumb." We get upset or agitated at someone or something. It could be the preacher, the elders, or any member of the church. It might be a lesson that was taught, a sermon that was preached, or just something said in a casual conversation. Very often, though, it relates to some problem in our own life that we haven't dealt with and are feeling guilty about.

Whatever the cause, this "sore thumb" tends to "stick out." And, when it does, we are extra sensitive. Everything that is said and everything that is done seems to be directed toward us. We imagine that the preacher is preaching "right at us," or that the lesson was intended only for our ears. We take offense at the slightest things - things that are more imagined than real. You see, the problem is with US. Our "sore thumb" is sticking out!

The best way to deal with this problem is to attack it at the source. If we really think that someone has wronged us or slighted us, we need to go to them (Matt 18:15). When we do this, we most often find that there has been a simple misunderstanding. Where real differences do exist, this approach will help find a speedy reconciliation. However, if the real problem is our own guilty conscience, we need to repent and get past it.

Sore thumbs need medicine and prompt attention. Without this, they grow more and more sensitive. Our spiritual "sore thumbs" need treatment, too. Without it they only get worse and worse.

***- by Greg Gwin***