

Two Into One • Part 5: Challenges to Intimacy I

INTRO • Gen2

Living Happily Ever After

1. A little girl had just heard the story of *Snow White* for the first time.
 - a. She couldn't wait to tell her mom.
 - b. She told her how Prince Charming arrived on his white horse & kissed the sleeping Snow White back to life.
 - c. Then she said, "Do you know what happened next?"
 - d. Her mother replied, "They lived happily ever after?"
 - e. The little girl said, "Oh no, Mommy. They got married!"
2. Getting married doesn't always lead to "happily ever after" as everyone knows.
3. A good marriage is **work** & every couple know trials & stress as a they learn to love & serve each other.
4. But the couple willing to invest themselves & do the work will find it pays off in amazing reward.

Intimacy

1. We began our series looking at the **purpose & goal** of marriage.
2. We keep returning to that foundation because it's the glue that ties all the parts of marriage together.
3. So, let's recap from Genesis 2
 - a. v18 → The **purpose** of marriage is to solve the problem of loneliness.
 - b. v24 → The **goal** of marriage is to become one →
4. By which we mean to be intimate.
 - a. Not just **physically**; though that's a part of it.
 - b. This is **total** intimacy; a mutual sharing of body, soul & spirit.
 - c. To know & be known without shame or the fear of rejection.

Challenges to Intimacy

1. Today & next Sunday we take a look at some of the **main challenges** to intimacy.
 2. These are by no means **all** of them, only a few; the ones couples deal with most often.
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3. This isn't typical Sunday sermon fare.
 - a. What we're about to look at tends to be **avoided** in church.
 - b. It gets dealt with in counseling, but rarely in a sermon.
 - c. But we can't deal honestly with marriage **without** talking about these things & seeing what God's Word says about them.
 - d. In our reluctance to deal w/difficult issues, we give the enemy an opening.
 - e. Hosea 4:6 says → **My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.**
 4. So we'll look at 4 challenges to intimacy. →
 - a. Today, Conflict and Money.
 - b. Next week, Family and Sex.

5. We begin with the one all the others end in → Conflict.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONFLICT

The Problem - James 4

1. Juan & Maria had just spent a week on their honeymoon.
 - a. It was the first day home when Juan took Maria by the hand & said,
 - b. “Now that we're married, dear, I hope you won't mind if I mention a few little **defects** I've noticed about you.”
 - c. Maria replied, “Not at all Juan. It was because of them I married **you**.
Otherwise I would have had a better husband.”
2. Every couple are going to experience the challenge of **conflict**.
3. Being fallen & selfish, we want **our** way.
4. James says it this way in James 4:1 ...

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

5. Put **any** 2 people together & tell them they have to live together for the rest of their lives, deferring to, serving, & being committed to one another, you **know** it's only a matter of time before there's going to be a collision of wills.
 - a. It may be minutes, it may be years; eventually it's going down.
 - b. One will want one thing at the same time the other wants something else.
 - c. And it's “Get ready to rumble!”
 - d. **Resolving** that showdown is what we want to get a handle on today.
6. I've done lots of pre-marital counseling over the years.
 - a. One of the sessions deals with conflict-resolution.
 - b. To introduce the subject, I say something like, “You realize living together for the next 2-3 decades means you're going to fight, right?”
 - c. I don't know how many have looked at me, holding hands, w/a look of surprise.
 - d. So I ask, “You mean, you 2 have **never yet disagreed** on anything so far?”
 - e. To which they reply that *of course* they've disagreed, argued.
But they're in love!!!! And love overcomes all.
 - f. What I've discovered after some digging is that when these couples faced conflict, instead of **resolving** it, they often just glossed over it.
 - 1) They don't want to risk the relationship so they defer the issue →
 - 2) Assuming if they don't talk about it, it'll go away.
 - 3) All you married couples → Does it just go away?
 - 4) Do problems **evaporate** on their own?
 - g. No. All that stuff you gloss over goes into a big pot simmering over a low fire.
 - h. One day, it's boiling over and making a major mess.
7. **Love** does not guarantee an **end** to conflict.
8. And unresolved conflict drives a wedge between a husband & wife that halts their progress in intimacy.

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9. Conflict's inevitable. It's coming. It's only a matter of time.
 10. What we need is **a plan** for how to resolve it.

Differences

1. Remember" Marriage is a **process** by which **Two become one**.
 - a. It isn't one becoming the other.
 - b. Each gives a little to gain a lot more.
2. Couples are often originally attracted to one another because of their **similarities**.
 - a. They find each other **attractive**.
 - b. They **share common interests**.
 - c. They like the same kind of **music** or **food** or **art**.
 - d. They enjoy doing **similar activities**.
3. These **similarities** draw them **to** one another.
4. But a funny thing happens at a certain point in their relationship.

Usually about a week **after** their wedding -
5. They discover there are a lot of **differences** between them; things they never knew before - or conveniently overlooked.
 - a. One is tidy & likes everything in its place. The other, wherever it falls is good enough.
 - b. One is careful w/the book-keeping, saves receipts. The other keeps nothing.
 - c. One spends, the other saves.
 - d. One thinks toilet paper should only come off the roll a certain way;
 - 1) 4 panels, folded into a triangle.
 - 2) The other doesn't care.
 - e. Who cares if the toilet seat is up or down?!
 - f. Toothpaste wars! Squeeze in the middle or roll up the end?
6. We laugh at the **classic** opposites who end up with each other.
 - a. Mary likes to sleep in while John's an early riser.
 - b. Tiffany loves veggies, Bill wraps everything in bacon.
 - c. Brenda loves classical, Chase likes Country.
 - d. Kate likes the beach, Steve the desert. // On & on it goes.
7. The challenge to intimacy is this -
 - a. W/our **similarities**, there's no conflict. We already share these things & are blended in them.
 - b. But our **differences** provide a vast field of **potential conflict**.
 - c. And THAT'S precisely where a couple will **either** → Move closer or further apart.
8. If Maria demands **her** desires are met while Juan demands his, there's going to be **trouble**.
9. A **covenant of companionship** means **they work to** resolve conflict in a manner that **further** unites them.
10. They must adopt the mindset that → Differences are an **opportunity** to BECOME ONE!
 - a. Rather than seeing them as turf to fight over, a hill to die on →
 - b. See them as the stuff of **greater** intimacy.
11. Intimacy isn't deepened in the things **we already agree on**.

12. It only grows when we work together challenges to it.

13. Early on Lynn & I realized we had very different leisure time hobbies.

- a. I like to ski, She likes VB. Conversely, neither of us were in to the other's hobby.
- b. For the couple yrs of our marriage, we were at an impasse because →
 - 1) Skiing isn't cheap and ate up precious vacation time.
 - 2) While VB meant a couple nights every week.
- c. So, neither one of us did what we loved.
- d. Then Lynn said she'd give skiing another try, **if** she could take a lesson from a pro; **not me**.
- e. And I said I'd like us to join a VB team.

14. We could have gone the other way.

- a. I could have demanded I go skiing while Lynn demanded she play VB.
- b. We would have ended up like many couples; vacationing separately & hardly seeing each other.

15. We chose instead to use the difference as a way to move toward one another.

16. Our lives are **richer** because we both have something **new** to enjoy.

17. Every couple has differences.

- a. The choice is yours on whether you're going to allow them to be a source of conflict or blending.
- b. Will they be **obstacles** to intimacy, or **opportunities** for it.

18. Don't forget → God **uses marriage** to make us more like Jesus.

- a. **Challenges** to intimacy aim to conform us to His image.
- b. Proverbs 27:17 says, **As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.**
- c. 2 swords, struck in **battle**, knick & notch each other.
- d. Swung long & hard enough, they **break**.
- e. But to a file at the right angle, a sword is **sharpened**.

19. Is your marriage a battle with swords banging against one another?

20. Or is your mate a **file** the Lord uses to sharpen you?

21. All this requires we be **willing to grow & change**.

22. A man bought a radio, plugged it in, turned it to a country station, & pulled all the knobs off.

- a. He tuned it to all he ever wanted or expected to hear.
- b. Some couples are like that; in a **rut of conflict**.
- c. They've pulled the knobs off & decided what has been is what will be.
- d. The only changing is what their **mate** does, not **them!**

23. That isn't marriage. // Marriage is 2 **becoming** 1. → Not 1 becoming the **other**.

THE CHALLENGE OF MONEY

The Problem

1. Another major challenge to intimacy many couples deal with is competing **values**.

- a. Not **moral** values, not **ethics**;
- b. I'm referring to **priorities** and **expectations** regarding **money**.

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2. Really money is an issue centered on what we consider to be of **value**.
 3. A dollar bill is **really** just a piece of paper. It's what it's able to **do** that causes problems.
 4. Many studies reveal that money problems are one of the main reasons couples split up.
 5. The **reason** is because it's **rarely** discussed **prior** to marriage.
 - a. Finances are a **private** matter.
 - b. So dating couples **avoid** it before marriage.
 - c. After the wedding, it's **Unavoidable**.
 - d. They discover they have very different attitudes toward acquiring, saving, managing, & spending money.
 - e. Since so much of life has a fiscal dimension, this becomes a major challenge to intimacy.

The Solution

1. The solution is simple. Instead of each claiming to have **THE** way to manage finances, they instead discover **what God says** & follow **His** direction.

Proverbs 24:3-4 • ³Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; ⁴By knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

2. God's Word is packed w/solid & specific instruction about how to handle our finances.
3. One of the best things you can do for your marriage is to dig into Scripture **together** in charting financial matters. → Take one of the Compass groups we regularly have.
4. The basic principle is **stewardship**.
 - a. Everything we have really belongs to God.
 - b. He's only loaned it to us to see what we'll do with it.
 - c. If we invest it so that it's used well, He gives more.
 - d. If we squander & fritter it away, we lose.
5. Money **deepens intimacy** when a couple realizes beyond **each** being a steward; their **marriage is a joint-stewardship**.
 - a. By pooling resources they're more efficient & can accomplish more.
 - b. Their partnership forms a team that invests in Kingdom-works.
 - c. As I look around this church, I see many couples committed to **being a blessing**.
 - d. When they give, they give **together**, as an act of worship.
 - e. What their giving **DOES**, is a reward to both.

CONCLUSION – Next Week

1. Next week, we'll look at two more challenges to intimacy.
 - a. What it means to leave & cleave.
 - b. And the **flesh** part of the one-flesh goal of marriage.
2. This Wednesday – Divorce, Remarriage, and Staying Single.
 - a. Maybe doesn't seem like it's for you.
 - b. It is. Because we live in a world adrift on all this and we need to know what God says so we can provide some wisdom and counsel to wounded men and women.