

ALL ABOUT FAMILIES

Celebrate The Joy of Marriage

by Stephen Teel

FOCUS

Man is the only created being on earth who celebrates. Genuine celebration occurs when we sense our own wholeness, our wholeness in our relationships both to God and to our fellowman. We are called by God to celebrate life in its fullest - and especially in our marriages. We will look at three areas which can help us celebrate our marriages.

KEY INGREDIENTS. What are those things which keep one rejoicing and excited about the love relationship in marriage?

SEX AS CELEBRATION. When sexuality is properly seen in the whole of life, it becomes a dimension of man's celebration of life in God.

ENHANCING CELEBRATION. What can we do to reignite the thrill?

KEY INGREDIENTS

The pressures of parenting, education, careers and aging parents dilute and detour the initial joys one experienced in marriage. Let's consider some key ingredients to keep us celebrating which Carole Mayhall (Today's Christian Woman, Jan/Feb. 1993, pg. 28-30) suggests:

FAITH. God is the SuperGlue that holds two people together and in love. In the beginning, Gen. 2:18 and down through time God has desired to bless man and woman with the joy that can only be found in marriage.

FRIENDSHIP. Be the president of your spouse's fan club. "Rejoice with those who rejoice", Romans 12:15, applies specially to your mate and his/hers recognition at the civic club, appointment as a deacon, college graduation, etc.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION. As partners we should work toward a mutually satisfying solution. When one begins to compete to win the argument, both lose. Marriage is a team sport - a tag team, not a contest where the winner takes all.

FIDELITY. It is an essential foundation to happiness and bliss, not just a desirable

option. When 100 happily married couples were interviewed, they considered faithfulness to their mate the "of course" of marriage. Matthew 19:1-9.

COMMUNICATION. The sharing of thoughts and feelings, which go beyond superficial talk, is one of the quickest ways to achieve genuine intimacy. Important is the acceptance of the other's differences and abolishing fears of rejection.

SEX AS CELEBRATION

Paul directs us "to honor (glorify) God in your body," 1 Corinthians 6:20. This statement is found in a section which covers numerous misunderstandings that Christians had about their sexuality. They, like ourselves, needed to remember that the sexual union in marriage is a celebration. We will consider some thoughts taken from Dwight Small's book, *Christian Celebrate Your Sexuality*.

APPROVED BY GOD. The human body and sexuality were designed by God and are therefore good. Still some Christians have a vague feeling that He doesn't approve of it. Such only robs one of intended joy. It would follow that "to honor and glorify God in one's body", would include among other things, one's sexuality. Sex as celebration in marriage is honoring God's good gifts and His gracious purposes for us.

ELEVATED ABOVE ORDINARINESS. The eroding effects of familiarity and repetition can be avoided when viewed as celebration. The Jewish celebrations, such as Passover, were vivid recollections of events and things highly valued in their history. Sexual celebration is a recurrent union which reminds of one's marital commitment to each other 'until death you do part.'

BOUND TOGETHER IN UNITY. "As husband and wife are called back to the recollection that they are bound together in a unity of life, so too are they reminded that together they are bound in in a unity of life in God through Jesus Christ." Paul's directive emphasizes this thought, "Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church...." Ephesians 5:25.

ENHANCING CELEBRATION

Sometimes one does not feel like celebrating. As wage-earners, scrubbers of toilets, den mothers, and corporate managers it is difficult to shift gears and kick into our sexual identities. Demands of family and job make it hard to think of his or her needs. Consider these practical suggestions from Elizabeth Newenhuyse (*Discipleship Journal*, Jul/Aug 1991, pg. 33-34) which can flame the fire of marital bliss.

COMMUNICATE as frequently as possible, using touch and affection when appropriate.

GO TO BED earlier.

DON'T FEEL PERSONALLY REJECTED when she/he does not feel 'in the mood.'

SHARE emotions openly--laugh and cry together.

PULL OUT THE PHOTO ALBUM and reminisce about the excitement and joy of courtship.

In the fast pace world of jobs and kid's ball practice, REALIZE THAT MARITAL BLISS does not always have to be spontaneous.

Marital sexuality GOES FAR BEYOND the physical act.

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