

by **Mac & Naudine Adaimi**

During the first years of our marriage, we soon realized that we would have to set boundaries, lay down rules – so to speak – and talk about the values we want to build on as a couple going forward in a fruitful marriage. We want to share a few of these principles with you.

The most important principle, or safety gate, for us was to not imitate the ideals and opinions of the culture around us, but to be inwardly transformed by the Holy Spirit through a total reformation of how we think. The focus for us, at that time, was not to transform the way we **feel**, but the way we **think**. This empowered us to discern God's will.

We love to see how Jesus transforms hearts and how couples start to shift in their approach, perspective and opinion when they build shared values based on the Word of God. Everyone wants to improve their marriage; the problem is that everyone wants instant improvement. Improving your marriage does not happen overnight. Like any other change you want to achieve in life, it takes time, effort and energy to create a marriage you love being in.

The first thing you need to adjust is your attitude. You need to start with an honest assessment about yourself. Step back and consider your own attitude before you start trying to change your spouse, then you will be heading in the right direction. Athletes can't win the prize if they don't follow the rules; so too in marriage, we have to 'set rules' and boundaries, for growth.

In adjusting our attitude, we need to be honest about how we see ourselves. This has an impact on our marriage. When we struggle with low self-esteem, it is a thinking disorder in that we view ourselves as inadequate or incompetent. Self-esteem is based on a system of pictures and feelings you have put together about yourself. It includes both mental and emotional pictures and feelings. *"As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."* (Proverbs 23:7).

The way you feel and see yourself, is how you will be and act in marriage. When you step into this trap of low self-esteem, your spouse will constantly have to convince you that you are loved, accepted and good enough. This causes your relationship to be one-sided and the one who is always trying to convince you becomes worn down.

Marriage is a leap of faith. You are each other's safety net. You need to instill healthy habits for a healthy marriage, therefore it is important to make decisions together on what would be best in each situation. When your marriage needs healing, work through the conflict until the pain subsides. When the pain subsides, the trouble might not be corrected. Deeper issues must be dealt with. Don't only try to solve the underlying problems, keep working at it until you have complete victory, not just when the pain subsides.

One of the safety gates we need to put in place is how we handle conflict. Somehow we seem to handle conflict as if we are a parent talking to a child. The moment we do this, it creates a defensive barrier. Talk adult-to-adult. Use "I feel" messages, e.g. "I feel upset when you come home late". Do not attack or belittle your spouse. When we handle conflict correctly, God can use it to grow us and strengthen our marriage as we don't have to defend our case anymore.

A marriage starts thriving when we put aside what our spouse deserves and respond by giving him or her what they need. Don't try to get even in your marriage (or any other relationship). Build each other up! Rise above the offence and give your spouse what they need!

Be careful not to live a money-centered life. It is easy to get caught up in the pursuit of wealth and material possessions. 1 Timothy 6:6-10 warns us that God is to be our focus, not money. We can easily be influenced by our money-centered society. God loves the generous giver, so be careful that you do not turn the principle around by grabbing and holding onto everything you want and only give from the left overs. If this is your focus with finance and possessions, this too could become the state of your relationship; a sense of entitlement, holding onto, grabbing and wanting more and more. Hear the words of Psalm 23 that says, "I shall not want". Our God is a God that gives and marriage is a wonderful place to imitate this principle.

Be sure to create a home. In a *house*, people can be staying together without sharing life. A *home* is where people live together, share and serve each other and make room for others. Our worth in the current culture, is to climb the ladder of personal success or other activities that, in themselves, are not wrong but have the potential to separate us from our spouse and godly relationships with those around us.

This could result in a husband and wife not talking to one another and hardly seeing or noticing their children. Decide as a couple what godly values you want to build on for your relationship. Family

identity has to do with who you are and what you stand for. Talk about it, communicate it and live it!

Make 1 Peter 4:8-9 your family mission: *“Above all, constantly echo God’s intense love for one another, for love will be a canopy over a multitude of sins. Be compassionate to foreigners without complaining”*. (Paraphrased in the Passion translation).

Make room for your spouse, in your heart and in your schedule! Serve each other; honour and care for each other. You have such a great opportunity to demonstrate God’s love to each other. When your spouse feels honoured and cared for, they receive others so much easier into their hearts. Duplicate to others the Godly fervour you have for each other.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mac and Naudine were missionaries for 8 years, prior to becoming pastors. During their pastoring services they became involved with various family ministries. They love to serve the people of God, especially with regards to restoring wholeness.

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