

# FAMILY MATTERS | Rules of Engagement Pt II

## INTRO:

### Quick Recap — Last Week's 5 Rules

- **Rule 1: Remember whose team you're on** — You're not opponents, you're teammates. Fight *for* the marriage, not against each other.
- **Rule 2: Do routine, preventative maintenance** — Don't let pressure build beneath the surface. Small, consistent communication beats catastrophic eruption every time.
- **Rule 3: Manage your anger in a Christlike way** — "*In your anger, do not sin.*" — Know when to call a timeout for yourself.
- **Rule 4: Control your tongue** — No name-calling. Erase the words *divorce*, *always* and *never* from your conflict vocabulary. Remember that the bible teaches us that our words either build up or tear down.
- **Rule 5: Remember to love one another** — Affirm your love *in the middle* of the conflict. Isolate the conflict to the issue and protect the relationship.

### The Bridge

- Last week we talked about *how* to fight.
- Today we're going to go deeper — because there are a few more rules that can make or break everything else.
- The first is a command most of us know but struggle to actually live out — forgive one another.
- The second is who are you calling when you need help? I'm not sure ghostbusters specialize in this (although some of you might claim your spouse has a demon—still not the right answer)
  - Who is in your corner? Who has access to your marriage? Who do you turn to when things get hard?
- The last one is in regards to focusing on the right stuff.

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## 1: FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER

### Colossians 3:13 NLT

<sup>13</sup> Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

#### A: YOU MUST FORGIVE

- Make room for one another's faults — don't expect or demand perfection (you can't meet that anyways)
- As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
  - That doesn't sound optional.
  - That doesn't sound like we can wait until they apologize with the right words, tone, etc.
  - But they've done sooooo much stupid stuff!?
    - Remember Jesus told Peter to forgive 70x7...

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## **Luke 17:3-4 NIV**

<sup>3</sup> So watch yourselves. "If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. <sup>4</sup> Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them."

- a figurative way of saying... again. AND again. AND again.

## **B: ONCE FORGIVEN, LET IT GO**

- Let it go, but expect right behavior, words, treatment — the right response moving forward
  - Forgiveness doesn't enable abuse or ongoing mistreatment.
- On the other hand, forgiveness doesn't keep rehashing and reopening old wounds that have been repented of.

## **1 Corinthians 13:4-8 NIV**

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. <sup>8</sup> Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

- The ESV has a footnote at the end of v5 (keep no record of wrongs) — it translates that differently, but notes that the greek text is literally 'does not count up wrongdoing'
- Put plainly: No keeping score.

## **C: FORGIVE YOURSELF**

- Some people live in a prison they put themselves in, even after they've been forgiven by the Lord and their spouse.
  - Knock it off. Drop the pity party. Stop dwelling on your failures.
  - "I don't feel worthy of forgiveness."
    - You're right. And you're wrong.
    - No one is worthy — that's the whole point.
      - (Who can deserve forgiveness?)
    - But Jesus loved you enough to die for you anyway, and that settles the matter.
  - Here's what I'll add: don't be so proud that you can give forgiveness but can't receive it. That's not humility — that's actually pride wearing a disguise.
    - You were never that good to begin with. None of us were. That's exactly why we need Jesus.
    - So receive the gift you'd freely give to someone else — and move on.
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## 2: SEEK THE RIGHT COUNSEL

### Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?

- Picture yourself in that chair. Hot lights. Dramatic music. The next question on the screen could change your life forever.
- You've made it further than most people do.
- But now the stakes are higher, the question is harder, and you're just not sure.
- You reach for your last lifeline — **Phone a Friend**.
- Here's the thing — *who you call in that moment matters more than almost anything else*.
- You're not just picking someone you like. You're not calling your funniest friend or your most encouraging friend.
- You need someone who actually knows the answer.
- The wrong call could cost you everything. The right one could change your life.
- In conflicts, particularly marriage conflicts—we want to consult godly wisdom and counsel!

### Proverbs 13:10 NIV

*<sup>10</sup> Where there is strife, there is pride, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.*

### Proverbs 19:20 NIV

*<sup>20</sup> Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise.*

### Proverbs 15:28 NIV

*<sup>28</sup> The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil.*

### A: THE WRONG COUNSEL:

- Like calling the mechanic friend for a gardening question. You'll get advice, but...
- **Do not make kids, parents, in-laws pick sides or get involved.**
  - That's not fair to them
  - That's not fair to your spouse
- **Really wrong counsel:**
  - Your opposite sex co-worker isn't a great option.
    - BTW: the idea-terminology "work spouse/wife/husband" is an absolute abomination to your marriage.
    - Your spouse is the only one who gets that type of title, privilege, access and relationship.
  - Your ex-bf/gf isn't a great option
  - Your friend that really dislikes your spouse isn't a great option
  - Your friend that has no clue what the Bible says—bad option
  - Your friend that has failed multiple relationships—not great
- **Often, the wrong counsel will**

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- Blindly support your 'side' of the story no matter what you say because they give advice or counsel that THEY THINK you WANT to hear.
- Will talk poorly of your spouse (dishonoring) and highlight your spouse's failures and flaws.
- This will likely put more fuel on your fire—causing the flames to rage all the more.
- Even worse, in the case of some examples—they will try to fill the gaps of your broken relationship—or you will find them more fulfilling than your spouse. Utter destruction and pain will follow.

## B: THE RIGHT COUNSEL:

- Will speak the truth graciously and in love
- Will honor your spouse and your relationship
- Their motive is to see your marriage succeed and not fail
- Their motive is to see the Lord honored in what they say and do
- They will be mature believers who share God's word and not worldly opinions
- They will pray with you through the storm
- Often the best counselors are ones who can speak to both at the same time.

## C: BE THE RIGHT COUNSEL

### (IF SOMEONE SEEKS OUT YOUR COUNSEL: you're the friend, coworker, family member)

- Honor the Lord and share his word
- Pray for the right words—sound wisdom to share
  - Don't rush to share your opinions
  - Listen to understand
  - Listen critically/with discernment—your friend is sharing in their anger and emotion, it's probably a one-sided perspective
- Honor the spouse not present.
- Your aim should be to help preserve and encourage the marriage
  - (Unless we're talking about unhealthy extremes—the actual biblical grounds for divorce)
  - (But even at that, divorce IS NOT always required)
  - (often times, we'll advocate for temporary separation with the goal of reconciliation rather than divorce)
- Your aim should also be to SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE
  - Help your friend see any potential blindspot of their own
  - Help them understand their spouse's point of view
- Pray for reconciliation and healthy resolution
  - Too many people love drama and need to grow up
  - No one wins when a marriage breaks down

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## **3: FOCUS ON THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS:**

### **Philippians 4:8 NIV**

*<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*

#### **A: REMEMBER YOUR LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER**

- What you think about, you'll see more often
  - Don't focus your thoughts on all of their failures
  - Think about the reasons why you love them.
  - Think about their strengths
  - Recognize their weaknesses and ask how you can help them there (not complain about them)
    - As a marriage, you're now one.
    - Eve was Adam's helpmate NOT pointer out of all his failures-er

#### **B: KEEP YOUR EYES ON JESUS**

- No matter how far apart you are right now... if you both seek to know and please Christ, you will inevitably draw nearer to one another.
  - Spend time in prayer
  - Spend time in God's word
  - Spend time in worship
- HANDLE YOUR BUSINESS FIRST
  - Too many times we're preoccupied with other people's failures and flaws.
  - "Take the 2x4 out of your own eye before addressing the sawdust in your spouse's"
  - You cannot CONTROL or CHANGE your spouse.
  - You can only control and change yourself
  - So handle your business and trust God to deal with your spouse.
    - But pray for them and love them through whatever they're going through.

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## **CLOSING REPSONSE:**

### **A: Forgive your spouse:**

- As the Lord forgave you, you must forgive others
- Once forgiven, burn the score card and let it go

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- Remember to forgive yourself

## **B: Seek godly counsel**

- The right counsel will tell you what God wants you to know
- The right counsel will tell you the truth even if it hurts
- The right counsel will honor your spouse (and the Lord)

## **C: Think about the right things**

- Dwell on the strengths of your spouse and remember your love
- Focus on your walk with Jesus — how can you please and honor him in the conflict
- As you both draw near to Christ, you'll draw near to one another