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Watch Out for Those Nails

by Don Wright

Nails in marriage are those things that puncture the relationship between a husband and wife and allow the romantic love to leak out. Once the romantic love begins to dwindle in a marriage relationship, the marriage itself is in danger. The best way to protect your marriage is to do those things that help you to stay in love and to avoid anything that puts that love at risk. For this to happen, you must avoid the nails in the road. What are some nails for which we should watch?

Constant Criticism. All criticism is not bad. Constructive criticism is often necessary and helpful for those who can receive it with the right spirit. The wise man said, "Iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend" (Prov 27:17). He also said, "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee" (Prov 9:8). These are principles that are applicable to the marriage relationship. Husbands and wives should learn how to take constructive criticism with a good attitude. However, it is important to note the difference between constructive criticism and destructive criticism. The difference is seen in the attitude with which it is given. Constructive criticism is given kindly and with genuine desire to help another. Destructive criticism is given constantly and out of a "critical" spirit. A critical spirit will puncture a marriage relationship and will eventually cause all the joy to seep out. The person who is hypercritical is a fault-finder who ignores the good and overemphasizes the bad in others. In a marriage this destroys the feeling of oneness and makes it impossible to maintain romantic love.

Rampant Rage. Everyone gets mad sometimes. Even the best and most loving spouses get angry at each other once in a while. Anger itself is not sinful (Eph. 4:26). However, a person that is either constantly mad or has a tendency to "blow up" has a problem that needs attention. In marriage short periods of anger are okay, as long as the issue causing the anger is addressed and solved, but relentless rage or outbursts of anger accompanied by yelling, threats, or some type of abuse are unacceptable. Anger is a home wrecker. It ruins everything good about a marriage. It ruins proper conversation. It ruins affection. It ruins quality time spent together. As Richard Walters puts it, "Rage blows up the bridges people need to reach each other, and resentment sends people scurrying behind barriers to hide from each other and to hurt each other indirectly."

While anger is bound to creep into every marriage at some point, there are two reactions to anger that are dangerous to personal relationships. The first is an under-reaction, which takes place when a spouse gets mad but acts as if he or she is not affected by the situation. The second is an over-reaction, which is often manifested by a blow-up of some kind. Fortunately, we do not have to under or overreact when feelings of anger intrude into our lives. God created us as rational beings with the ability to control ourselves. In fact the Bible says a lot about the importance of self-control or temperance (1 Cor. 9:25-27; Gal. 5:22-23; 2 Pet. 1:3-9). And let's remember where we started with this business of anger. Paul commands that we don't allow feelings of anger to persist (Eph. 4:26). When we do this, even in our marriages, we are violating God's Word (Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; Prov. 16:32; Prov. 22:24-25).

Short-sighted Selfishness. All selfishness is short-sighted. You don't have to look far in order to look at yourself. The Bible teaches us, however, to look at others and see what we can do for them (Phil. 2:3-4). Here is a biblical principle that will greatly enhance and enrich any marriage. "...let each esteem other better than themselves." The word "esteem" means "to consider." A little consideration goes a long way in marriage. We must learn to be considerate of each other as husbands and wives. Here are some signs of selfishness in marriage.

- Thinking more about having your needs met than meeting those of your spouse.

- Always having to have your way.
- More interested in winning an argument than you are in trying to understand how your spouse feels about a point of dispute.
- Living with a “what’s in it for me” attitude.

Marriages cannot reach their full potential until we rid ourselves of the disease of self-centeredness. Dr. E. Stanley Jones, founder of the Christian Ashram, once said that “there can be no love between a husband and wife unless there is mutual self-surrender. Love simply cannot spring up without that self-surrender to each other. If either withholds the self, love cannot exist.”

Don’t let selfishness stop you from having a great marriage. Don’t let it stop you from saying you are sorry, or listening to your spouse and trying to understand his or her feelings.

The Christian's Relationship with the World

Richie Thetford

It is imperative that Christians recognize the proper relationship that we are to have with the world. In 1 John 2:15-17 we are told that we are not to love the world.

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24).

The points that John and Jesus are making is that we cannot put the things of this world above the love of Christ. We are also not to conform ourselves to the world (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 4:1-4). It is true that we are in the world but we are not to be of the world (John 17:11, 16; Philippians 2:15). Christians are supposed to live righteously so that we can have a positive impact upon others so as to be able to convert them to Christ (John 17:18; 20:21). When Christians understand our proper relationship with the world then we will be free from worldly cares (Matthew 13:22; 2 Timothy 2:4), and not be bound by the pleasures of sin (Hebrews 11:24-26; James 5:5).