

Dear Friends of Alpha!

May is my anniversary time with Alpha! 29 years ago I walked into Alpha's small office for the first time. At that time Alpha had been closed for months and there wasn't much activity on the calendar. It took several years for me to be established as someone who was biblical, competent, and eventually earn the respect of Christians in the area. All these years later my calendar stays busy and is usually booked several weeks ahead.

What is so interesting to me is how counseling needs have changed. Back in the 1990's and early 2000's almost all of our work was with couples and individual adults. The problems presented to us varied from minor to catastrophic issues and God has always been faithful in overseeing our work with hurting people.

In recent years we have noticed some interesting changes in the ages of people we see, and also the problems bringing people into Alpha.

Currently I am working with a 10 year old and a 14 year old and have seen a growing number of high school students. Just before Easter, I received a phone message from a parent wanting counsel for a 3 year old! That is not a misprint! Now I know 3 year olds can be a handful but our present culture seems to be struggling with even basic parenting skills.

Part of the problem comes from our culture no longer being guided by the teachings of the Bible and in some cases biblical principals are considered dangerous or illegal!

In our family, all our children had to memorize Ephesians 6:1-3: "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with a promise), that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.*" ESV Our children were not always happy with our rules but they learned that the consequences for disobeying were more unpleasant than the pleasure disobedience.

Likewise marriage is always a work in progress and it isn't all happiness and good times. My understanding of the Genesis 3 curses that God put on Adam and Eve includes marriage not fulfilling our hopes and expectations. Genesis 3:16 "...*Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.*" ESV

Doesn't that just sound like pain and heartache? In all these years at Alpha the primary problem that people have come to Alpha seeking help for is

marital difficulties. It is usually described as 'communication problems' but that is just the surface of a much deeper defect.

Recently, I was given an article that effectively and efficiently confronts some major problems with modern marriage. The article is by Dave Willis and is titled I'm Not in Love with My Spouse Anymore. It can be found online. Its purpose is to help couples who are facing struggles, boredom, and the pain of being in a loveless marriage.

Five Truths

1. Statistically, "unhappy" couples who stay together are likely to be "happy" within five years. Working through difficulties TOGETHER tends to eventually bring a deeper sense of satisfaction and contentment in both spouses.
2. Having an affair is NEVER the answer!
3. Choose what's valuable in the long run, instead of what's easy in the moment. The easiest choice is seldom the best choice!
4. Remember that lasting love is based on commitments, not feelings! In the Bible, which is a remarkably practical marriage manual, God commands us to love. For love to be a commandment it means love must also be a choice...not a feeling. When we choose to love, serve, and encourage our spouse daily, our feelings almost always catch up!
5. Your spouse needs your love the most in the moments when they "deserve" it least! If you want your marriage to work, don't treat your spouse the way your spouse treats you; treat your spouse the way God treats you!

God Bless You and please continue to pray for Debi and me as we minister to hurting people!

Richard

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