

Five Agreements for A Dynamic Marriage

([Genesis 2:21-25](#), Amos 3:3, [Malachi 2:15-16](#), [Matthew 19:5-6](#))

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1 Corinthians 1:10

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

Amos 3:3

Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?

Agreement #1: We Were Made for Closeness

The flesh gets a bad rap in the Bible ... understandably. In the New Testament, it usually refers to our fallen nature – the “*sarx*”. It is that part of us – appetites and desires -- that likes to go its own way and do its own thing!

- The flesh was intended in marriage to be a tool of ***unity***.
- When God called Adam and Eve to become “one flesh”, He meant their ***bodies***, certainly.
 - But He also meant their ***entire persons*** – operating as one, thinking as one, conquering as one, marching as one, working as one and worshiping as one.

When God determined that the man and the woman should become ***one flesh***, He was calling them to live “***in pursuit of closeness***” with one another – covenant relationship!

In Malachi 2:13-16, the men were leaving their wives for Canaanite women. Malachi says they were ***unfaithful or dealing treacherously*** with their wives. They were being unfaithful to the person and unfaithful to God’s standard for marriage. ***They were intended to model covenant closeness.***

- ***Closeness (oneness) is not simply an idea or nice notion. God commands that we pursue it!*** Our wives are our *consort, partner*. Our spouse is ***the other half*** who makes us ***whole***. She is your wife by *covenant agreement ... obligation ... a binding oath of promise*.

The Hebrew word for one, ***echad***, means “altogether”, “one”, “same”, “single”. The stress is on their ***spiritual and physical unity*** while recognizing the ***diversity of the oneness!*** ***The picture is one of personalities in sync together*** that we can wear each other’s glasses ...

- The question is, ***what challenges our oneness*** — or the pursuit of closeness? It’s our natural bent toward ***self-protection*** that we all have.
- We protect ourselves from ***the pain of separation and distance*** – from God and from one another. (Genesis 3:9-16) ***No one likes to feel alone.***

But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”

He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."
And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

The man said, "The woman you put here with me —she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,
"Cursed are you above all livestock
and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly
and you will eat dust

all the days of your life.

And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel."

To the woman he said,

"I will make your pains in childbearing very severe;
with painful labor you will give birth to children.

Your desire will be for your husband,
and he will rule over you."

Agreement #2: We Matter Before Everyone Else Matters

- It's impossible to be attached without nurturing the deepest needs of our spouse.
- Our secondary responsibilities get in the way of our primary ministries to one another because of ...
 - Ambition & the Fear of Failure
 - Failure to Set Relationship Boundaries
 - Desires for Approval
 - Exhaustion!
 - Financial Stress
 - Fear of Being Our Parents
- On average U.S. couples spend about 12 minutes per day talking & connecting.
 - Alone some time is good for everyone.
 - But alone all the time in our marriages is not good for any of us.
 - We could solve a lot just by doubling the amount of time we spend together in fulfilling conversation.
- Healthy Family Flows From Healthy Marriages
 - Your marriage will always be more important than your responsibilities ... but your responsibilities will often feel more urgent than your marriage.
 - Your church will get over losing you; (hopefully) your spouse & children won't.

- God didn't ask us to marry the church we pastor.
 - **Husbands, love your wives. Jesus will build the church.**
- The **pace of your spouse** should strongly influence the **pace of your calendar**.
 - Your spouse's level of **emotional attachment to you** is the gauge by which you can measure ...
 - whether your work load is **unbalanced**.
 - whether your spouse's **need for closeness** is being met.

Agreement #3: We Both Have Legitimate Needs

- "My needs" are not **more important** than "your needs"!
 - We're just different people.
 - We express our needs differently.
 - But generally, we express our needs in a more surface manner.
- We tend to **dismiss the others' needs** as illegitimate because their needs stretch or tax us **emotionally**.
 - We enter into a foreign space that we don't understand.
 - It makes very little sense to us.
 - Or we have no frame of reference for the need or why it exists.
- What Do You Need?
 - Share 5 things that you think you need from your spouse.
 - How would having those needs addressed make you feel closer to him/her?
 - Leadership & direction (RW)
 - Financial harmony (Rob & Don)
 - Security ... financial, emotional, physical, spiritual
 - Attention
 - Parental harmony
 - A different/better personality, i.e. less rigid & controlling, less fearful
 - Meaning, Significance, to Matter
 - Agreement on parenting styles
 - Better communication
 - To feel heard
 - To be seen
 - To feel loved
 - To feel respected
- At the core, our deepest needs come down to feeling **loved and respected**.

Ephesians 5:22-33

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

*25 Husbands, **love your wives**, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own*

bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, **and let the wife see that she respects her husband.**

Agreement #4: We Both Have A Deep Need For Secure Emotional Attachment

- **Problems** arise when our (legitimate) deepest needs are not being met!
 - Anyone whose deepest needs are being met is **happy!**
 - Our deepest needs are not for
 - better communication ...
 - better time management ...
 - more money ...
 - better or more sex ...
 - nicer things ...
 - more spacious homes ...
 - more consistent date nights.

1 John 4:18 (ESV):

18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

- Emotional connection is **basic** to our human need.
 - Emotional starvation & deprivation, much like physical starvation, have a profound impact on our personalities.
 - We were not made for **isolation** and uber-independence. We were made for **healthy interdependence**.
 - Every one of us has an emotional need that we brought into our marriages.
 - We can spend a lifetime missing our spouses deepest emotional need.
- “Most fights in our marriages are protests over **emotional disconnection**.” (Dr. Sue Johnson)
 - When a spouse feels nagged over the hours he/she works, the issue is not the hours. **It’s the fear of not working those hours and having financial security.**
 - When a spouse commits adultery, sex is not the real draw. **It’s an attempt to fill an emotional longing ... for nurture, warmth, attention, affirmation.**
 - When a spouse constantly overspends, often **there is a search for significance and the hope that things will fill the longing.**
- Anger, criticism, demands, withdrawals are really **cries for connection**. (E.g. Joe & Kaliq)
 - “Why don’t you see me?”

- “Why am I not important?”
- “Why do you treat me like I’m invisible?”
- “Why are you pulling away from me when I need you?”
- When we lose connection with each other feelings of ***insecurity ramp up***.
 - We become more ***demanding & clingy***.
 - Or we ***detach*** to protect and soothe ourselves.
- When insecurity ramps up, a ***brutal cycle*** begins. (“Crazy Cycle” or “Protest Polka”)
 - One shouts louder in anger, wanting to be seen, heard, felt and emotionally connected.
 - The other person withdraws in defensiveness and often silence ... which is more frustrating.
 - The silence may be because of shame, because of lack of emotional language, or fear of being seen as inadequate.
- Until we develop the ***language of attachment***, we grow ***farther apart***.
 - Attachment language means learning to say what we ***really need***.
 - Attachment language means learning to say what we ***really feel***.
 - Attachment language means telling the other person ***how much we care***.

Agreement #5: We Can Meet Each Other’s Emotional Needs

- ***Choose Harmony Over Horsemen***
 - *Harmony is a choice ... timing, tone ... know the other’s triggers.*

Dr. John Gotman’s 4 Horsemen of The Apocalypse

- Criticism (Fight)
 - Describing a flaw in your spouse’s personality
 - Implies there’s something wrong with your spouse
 - Usually begins with “You never ...” or “You always ...”
 - Women usually exceed men
 - It’s always destructive.
- Defensiveness (Flight)
 - An attempt to ward off perceived attack
 - An attempt to protect one’s innocence
 - Sometimes done by counter-attacking or whining (playing the victim)
- Contempt (Fight)
 - Putting someone down
 - Taking the “high moral ground”
 - Fed by a superiority complex ... sometimes with belligerence
 - A tendency to scan the environment for people’s mistakes
 - (Universally recognizable by the pulling of the left-lip corner)
 - ***The single best predictor of divorce!***
- Stonewalling (Freezing)

- The listener withdraws from the interaction, while staying in the room.
- No listening cues.
- **1 Corinthians 1:10** ... Choose agreement and reject divisions. (*Sumphoneo = sound together*)

"I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment."

- **Choose The Better Triggers – i.e. prayer, self-control, fasting, patience.**
 - **Criticism:** **A Gentle Start Up** (Control your tongue – James 3:8) ... "A gentle answer turns away wrath ..."
○ *"...but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison."*
 - **Defensiveness:** **Accept Responsibility** (for At Least Part of the Problem) 1 Jn. 1:9
 - **Contempt:** **Describe your feelings & needs** ... create a culture of appreciation.
 - **Stonewalling:** **Self-sooth and stay connected in the interaction.**
- **Choose Vulnerability – Song of Songs 1-8**