

## MIRRORS

Proverbs 15:31 ... "The ear that hears the rebukes of life will abide among the wise."

Over our lifetimes we develop certain habits, traits and attitudes. The longer you live, the more imbedded into your nature and character they become. If, for instance, you do not marry until you are thirty years old, you will have already adopted certain personality quirks. Your friends might consider you to be a bit unusual and overlook your strangeness because they do not have to live with you. However, when you marry and live with your spouse, he or she may find your strangeness difficult to live with.

After enduring and putting up with your strange behaviors for a few weeks, your new spouse may start to confront you about them. He or she may challenge something you said, criticize a particular habit, complain about your attitude and otherwise shake up your life, which you thought was pretty good and stable before you married because few complained to you. When your spouse begins to speak of your behavior, it will make you wonder why your life has suddenly become more difficult and full of stress and conflict. You may blame your new spouse for being narrow minded, picky, too emotional, or unforgiving. What is really happening?

When you live alone, you will not notice that you have developed some bizarre behaviors or manners that others find hard to accept. You may notice that close friends do not invite you to their homes, or they limit their socializing with you, but you never understand why. After you get married, you find out why. This is because your spouse loves you enough to reflect back to you the hurt, distrust, rudeness, or insensitivity of what you do and say. If you insult a friend, they might just turn away and go home. But, your spouse lives with you; he or she has no place to go and feels obligated to confront you with your habits, traits and attitudes. And, you are shocked. You never realized you were a louse. No one ever cared enough for you to tell you that.

My advice applies both to old married folks and those still waiting to marry:

- 1) Never marry with the intention of "fixing" your spouse (it never works because change comes from within),
- 2) Study the face of your spouse (and close friends) to learn how you please or hurt them, and
- 3) When you are challenged by your spouse about a habit, trait or attitude, do not fight back; instead, ask God to reveal how you are misbehaving and to help you change.

Your spouse and your closest friends are mirrors. In their faces and words, you will observe the effect of your words and actions. Use this to your advantage and ask God to help you become a better person.

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