

Enjoying being a married missionary!

Marriage on the mission field – part 2

How can we find time for each other amid our busyness as missionaries?

Introduction:

- Very good question – very practical & real – a struggle or battle for all of us within our western society, with priorities shaped by our environment
- Need to apply the three main issues discussed in our last session: priorities, attitudes, and changing & growing

Questions behind the question:

- “Finding time”? or is it more an issue of how can we MAKE time for one another? what is the core issue? is it really our busyness? (sometimes in Christian ministry we are extremely busy and we just have to knuckle down and run hard at such times) or is there a deeper issue? on what basis do we order our days/time?
- “Busyness”? what is our fundamental attitude towards busyness? are we proud to be known and seen as busy? do we see busyness in life & ministry a sign or mark of importance? how do we feel when we aren’t busy? have we considered whether it is “our” busyness or “God’s”?

Key issues:

Priorities:

- ◆ Remember the biblical order of priorities: God – personal growth – life’s partner – children – others – have you had any challenges over the past two weeks applying these? How did you work them out?
- ◆ Is it possible that some Christian workers use their busyness in ministry (“amazing opportunities!”) to escape from tackling the more difficult challenges of developing and strengthening their relationships at home? Is it equally possible that some Christian workers can use their marriage or home responsibilities as an excuse for not getting more involved in God’s work?
- ◆ Convictions:
 - Neither “work” or “family” or “marriage” may be allowed to become an idol for God’s ministers
 - When we have small children at home, then we will be busy and will need to accept the limitations that these responsibilities place upon our involvement in ministry – no lesser a missionary (“Is my church paying for me to be out here playing with my children?” Yes!)
 - It is right to share the responsibilities with children between mother and father but it is also best if you see the wife/mother as the “prime care-er” and the husband/father as the “prime worker” (as the people in your culture will view it)

Attitudes:

- ◆ Do we deep down believe that to be busy proves that we are doing something really important for God? Is that true? How do we feel when people say things like: “You are such very busy people”? Proud? Honoured? Fulfilled? Depressed? Is it your true aim to be as busy as you possibly can? Is this the way

that God wants you to be? (Did Jesus ever escape from the crowds and even His disciples? Did He ever rest?)

- ◆ Are some people busy about doing nothing? Likes of activities but little forward action or movement? Spinning their wheels?
- ◆ Do we in the secret of our minds and hearts find our identity and emotional well-being through being busy, ie DOING, DOING, DOING?
- ◆ Will you write prayer letters designed to impress your friends and supporters with how busy you are (eg giving long lists of all you are doing, and telling them how constantly tired you are)?
- ◆ Conviction: God calls us to enter into His ministry in a spirit of peace and rest rather than agitation and frustration – see Isaiah 26:3; 32:15 – where there is agitation, we have probably moved out of God’s divine order into man’s order

Planning/Scheduling:

- ◆ How can we ensure that we have time for one another? How can we MAKE it happen? Only by “diarising” or “scheduling” times for one another
- ◆ How can we fill these times? What are they for? Just to sit down in front of one another and say: “Talk”?!
- ◆ What is involved in communicating with one another? – allowing our life’s partner into our mind and heart as a visible sign of the genuineness of our love for them *versus* shutting them out, keeping them at arm’s length, not caring enough to give the energy to informing them about what is going on etc.
- ◆ Conviction: Open lines of communication is one of the foremost keys to a healthy, growing marriage – an obligation for the rest of our lives – including throughout our times of full-time Christian ministry – why? Scenarios: other people demanding our attention; very tired from our ministries (just don’t have the energy to think or talk – so need to choose the right time for communicating)

Freedom vs. guilt:

- ◆ What motivates you to take on new responsibilities? eagerness to do more? because you just love to do that kind of work? a sense that you “should/ought” be doing more for God (feeling guilty that you have “free time” on your hands and if you don’t have something to do, you’ll be bored)?
- ◆ How can we help prevent serving Christ out of a sense of false guilt? Consider the following statements and evaluate the hidden issues of motivation for ministry behind each one:
 - “our leader has put a guilt trip on me – I can’t get out of it – if I don’t do it, then I’m afraid that he could turn negative against me”;
 - “if I don’t do it, it just won’t get done”; and
 - “there’s no one else around who can do it as well as I can”.
- ◆ How does submitting to God and our leaders in a spirit of humility help bring us into freedom in ministry? How can consulting with our leader(s) save us from taking on too much work that creates over-stress in our relationships?
- ◆ How can we respond in freedom (not out of guilt) to an overly zealous, workaholic mission leader who is ready to pile as much on you as you are willing to accept? What are the key issues here?
- ◆ Convictions:
 - God will never heap on us more than we are humanly able to cope with – to bring us down into heaviness and darkness of spirit – this is from man

- We must take responsibility for what we take on – even if we are requested to get involved in a particular ministry
- We will experience freedom in our Christian service when we believe that God has called us to serve Him in this particular ministry (see Matt.11:28-30) – His burdens are “light” – whereas man’s burdens are heavy, ministry is done with a heavy heart, we drag our feet, feel discouraged, overwhelmed, joyless et al – this happens inevitably but we should see these as “warning lights/signals” and do something about them

Conclusion:

- Busyness has a lot to do with our personal values, priorities and beliefs – we must leave ourselves open to examine all of these on the basis of God’s Word and be ready to grow in our understanding of God’s mind in each of these areas through the tests and experiences that God will bring into our lives as we serve Him
- Learn to live with tension such as busyness in ministry versus having time for one another – don’t expect the ideal; live with the real/actual

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