

10 Tips for Wholehearted Relationships

Reminders:

- Some of you have asked about my blog and steveholtonline.org and the fact that you have not been able to get to my blog. We have a team working on this...
- Telios tonight→D-groups tonight starting at 7:45 for youth, downstairs in the youth room. Olympics tonight!
- My book, *The God Wild Marriage*, still available in the lobby for \$5 donation, but if you don't have the money, just take one
- Pit Stop in two weeks, March 7th, a 30 minute informational meeting about The Road—vision and values
- Baptism in three weeks, March 14th, let us know
- Easter at The Road:
 - Thursday April 2nd Seder Dinner with a Jewish Rabbi
 - Friday April 3rd Good Friday Service
 - Saturday April 4th Easter Service with kids
 - Sunday April 5th Easter Sunrise Service
- Youth/Telios Service Project. We will be moving several thousands of books from Pastor Steve's house and bring them to the church. It will be the start of a large library for the Road.
 - Saturday the 21st at 3pm
 - Location: everyone will meet at Chapel Hills Baptist Church and then travel to Pastor Steve's house
 - Note: Parents will only need to drop their student off at the church, if they would like to join however, please feel free. We will drive the kids back to the church so that parents will only need to show up to church

Let's pray...Lord, connection why we are here. You gave us all a

desire for connection...

Connection is why we are here—it's what makes life worth living. Relationships are the fiber of life. Relationships hold life together. Broken relationships, broken life! Wholehearted relationships bring wholehearted life, healed, joyful relationships mean joyful healed life

Relationships are the fiber of life—connection with others is what we live for and find joy. Our jobs will come and go; our success will be shortlived, but connection in loving joyful relationships is truly what makes life worth living

The ability to feel connected is why we are here! You can have frustrating, bitter, confused relationships or joyful life giving relationships

Ex. [Ty Tashiro](#) explains that couples in their first year of marriages score 86% for marriage satisfaction. By the seventh year, it's under 50%.

Yes, about 50% of couples get divorced. Another 10-15% separate but do not file paperwork. And 7 more percent are chronically unhappy. That means 2/3's of marriages are not very joyful.

Liz and I want to give you 10 Tips for living with WHOLEHEARTED relationships. These are suggestions, thoughts on having joyful relationships...

- We are on a journey just like all of you
- This is a process and we have not even come close to arriving
- Pilgrimage with the Lord and each other

Are you ready? Are you prepared? Are you excited? It's sizzlin, it's spicy, here it is...

Tip #1 A Commitment to Gritty Work. (on the Relationship)

- Joyful fruitful wholehearted relationships take work! Hard work!
- It is gritty and hard. I would much rather go out and build a house than work on human relationships—they are squishy, squirmy, emotional, and unpredictable. Right?
- Ex. We lived in Japan for almost ten years and still, even now, many marriages are still arranged marriages

Interesting Findings from Love Marriages vs Arranged Marriages

The couples who had married for love and been together less than a year averaged a score of 70 points out of a possible 91 on the love scale, but these numbers steadily fell over time. The love couples who had been married ten years or longer had an average score of only 40 points. In contrast, the couples in arranged marriages were less in love at the outset, averaging 58 points, but their feelings increased over time to an average score of 68 at the ten or more years mark.

- What's the secret behind the long term success of arranged marriages?
- **They have to work at it. It's like a business partnership Ex. My grandfather Joe and Ola...**
- They didn't passively rely on "magic" and intense emotion. They had to spend a lot of time thinking and talking, about *how to make it work*

Elements of fairy tales such as Cinderella were present in 78 percent of people's beliefs about romantic love. Those people were more likely to have experienced disillusionment, devastation, and angst in their relationships than were those

who gave less credence to fairy tales. – Lockhart 2000

- Feeling like it's all magic means it's out of your control — and that without that initial magic, it's hopeless.
- **The happiness of arranged marriages means a couple can make magic if they try.**

Tip #2 Experience the Love of Jesus.

- Most Christians haven't experienced the love of Christ—this is partly why the divorce rate is just as high inside the church as outside the church
- The Bible says that “God is love.” and I believe it all begins here!
- Experience the love of Christ. Learning to get into the love of Christ daily
- Jesus, in speaking of his disciples prayed, “And I have declared to them your name, and will declare it, that the love with which you loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” (John 17:26)
- **This is the power of the Holy Spirit—learning to daily experience the love of Christ through the filling and empowering of the Holy Spirit**
- **Emptying yourself so that Christ can fill you with His Holy Spirit**
- **Bible says**, “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. **10** If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's

commandments and abide in His love.

- **11** “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full. (John 15:9-11)
- To experience the intimacy and emotional power of knowing that you are beloved
- “Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, whom My soul is well pleased!
Him” (Matt 12:18)
 - **3 key words: Servant, Spirit, Beloved**
- God is now your father and you are His son and daughter. You are in His family and He loves you with an everlasting love
- Let God love you! Ask him next time, “Jesus, love me today”

My Beloved in
I will put My Spirit

Tip #3 Love and Value Yourself.

- You are going to love others the way you love yourself!
- Loving yourself enough to see the value of who you are—self respect. Love flows from a “heart set” that begins with knowing and loving yourself enough to value others as you value yourself
- Jesus said, “love God with all of your heart...and your neighbor as yourself”
- When you ask people about love, belonging, they always tell you about their broken hearts, their disconnections, and their losses. When I asked about connection, everyone talks about disconnections. Why?
- The big unnamed thing—that thing that unravels

connection—it's shame!

- Shame is the fear of disconnection. We all think, “Is there something about me that if people see it I won't be worthy of connection?” No one wants to talk about it and the less you talk about it, the more you have it. It's universal. All of us have it.
- **If you are fearful of connection, you won't do it.**
- Brene Brown found in her decade long research into shame, boiled down to two groups of people—1) people who really have a sense of worthiness and a strong sense of love and belonging, and 2) the group that didn't have it.
- Only one variable separated the people who have a strong sense of belonging and those who struggle for it. The people who had a strong sense of belonging, believed they were worthy of love and belonging! And those who lived in shame didn't believe this about themselves
- Listen, Jesus makes us worthy! Jesus can give you self worth!

Tip #4 Courage to be Wholehearted.

- Hard part-We are fearful that we are not worthy of connection! Fear kills wholeheartedness.
- Be wholehearted! It takes courage to be wholehearted and imperfect.
 - Courage from Latin, *cour*-heart, which means, “to tell your story of who you are with your whole heart.”
 - Very simply the courage to be imperfect, and yet open to others
 - Courage means not quitting when the road is rocky.

Courage to be yourself

- Courage to share your whole being—not just the good but the bad too
- I think this is what Jesus is speaking of in Matthew 5:3-12...the “Blessed’s” he concludes this section with “rejoice and be exceedingly glad”

Tip #5 Embrace Vulnerability.

- Joy comes in connection through authenticity and vulnerability.
- You must let go of who you thought you should be and start embracing who you truly are!
- You must quit the posing and pretending to please people and embrace the real you, the beautiful you, the broken you
- Joy comes in being the first one to say, “I’m broken in these areas...” and thus inviting others to open up to their own confusion and darkness
- Embracing vulnerability does 3 things:
 - 1) It breaks the power of darkness and demons over your own heart by exposing them
 - 2) It starts the process of healing in your relationships
 - 3) It becomes an invitation for others to quit posing and pretending and invites authenticity into the relationship

Tip #6 Practice Gratitude.

- Start just being thankful to people for all they do in your life—how they contribute to your life, how they show love through the little things they do

- Tell people “thank you” when they do something nice or kind
- Even if you believe the world owes you something, start thanking people anyway and watch God work in your heart a deeper love for others

Tip #7 Confess your Sins.

- This is sooo hard to do in relationships. Married or unmarried. Confessing our sin is tough.
- **James 5:16** Confess *your* sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.
- When we confess our sins to others, we get set free. When we confess our sins toward people, we get set free from the chains of that other person

Tip #8 Forgive those who have Wronged you.

- You want the chains broken in your relationships—start forgiving them, let go of your anger
 - Forgiveness does not mean trust
 - Forgiveness is commanded but trust is earned
- Many of us struggle with anger because we are still carrying unresolved anger in our hearts due to past injustice in which we have never forgiven those people
- John writes in 1 John that if we hate our brother we live in darkness and walk in darkness
- Lord’s Prayer: “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”
- To break free from darkness, we must choose to forgive those

who have wronged us

- If you feel you can't forgive, share your unforgiveness with someone and ask them to pray for you. Take it to the Lord.

Tip #9 Don't keep Score.

- No relationship is a 50-50 proposition—you never get out of it what you think you have put into it
- The key to joyful relationships not keeping a score, but both people giving more than they get out of it

Tip #10 Talk and Connect.

- All the studies show that 90% of happiness has to do with your general outlook on life. You can learn a lot about your own worldview by paying attention to "self-talk" -- the conversation you have in your head about yourself and the world around you. Even more important, changing how you talk to yourself can actually help shift your perspective, too.
- Saying to yourself each of the tips above is a good starting point:
 - **I am going to work hard at my relationships and they will be joyful and fulfilling**
 - **I am beloved of God and I can experience God's love in my life**
 - **I am a courageous person and I will live wholeheartedly**
 - **I will embrace vulnerability and be open to others**
 - **I will be thankful to others for all they have done for me**
 - **I will confess my sins quickly and forgive others who have hurt me**
 - **I will not keep score—rather, I will be a servant disciple**

- Long term marriages and long term friendships are built on communication—sharing with each other
- Silence is deadly to a relationship!
- **Ex. we see people emailing and texting heavy stuff. Folks you must go face-to-face, talk about it...**
- Heart to heart. Sharing the highs and lows, sharing the defeats and victories
- **Talk often, talk honestly, talk freely.**