



the TIE THAT BINDS

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Editor:
Mrs. Jeanne Jordan

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Disputable Matters *by Pastor Doug Jordan*

Back in the '80's Bruce Feirstein wrote a best-selling book entitled, *Real Men Don't Eat Quiche—A Guidebook to All That is Truly Masculine*. Not long after that, in response to Feirstein's book, Joyce Jillson wrote a similar book that she entitled, *Real Women Don't Pump Gas—a Guide to all that is Divinely Feminine*. It's not necessary to actually read these books to know what they are about. Just by looking at the titles we can see that the first book described what 'real men' do and don't do and the second talked about what 'real women' do or don't do.

How about this book idea? What about a book concerning what real Christians do or don't do? That would certainly be a best-seller! The chapter ideas are limitless because we all have our own ideas as to how real Christians behave. For example, I could include a chapter or two dealing with the convictions of believers who come out of a traditional Southern Baptist Church background. Those people would probably say *real* Christians love organ music, the kind that rattles your bones each Sunday! They might also say that *real* Christians don't play cards or dance or drink alcohol. In that particular chapter I could quote that old bit of popular southern parental wisdom: "Don't drink, smoke, chew or hang around with girls that do."

I could also include chapters about the beliefs of people who come from a Pentecostal or Charismatic background where they would probably say that '*real Christians*' worship with their hands raised while swaying back and forth in time to the music...and say "*alleluia*" about five times per prayer. I could include a chapter about believers who come from a 'high church' setting, people who would probably say that '*real Chris-*

tians' know what a narthex is.

You know what I'm talking about, because, depending on our background we *all* have extra-Biblical rules that we embrace as being important distinctives of genuine disciples of Jesus. We all define what a '*real Christian*' is in different ways. Throughout the history of the church there have been the biblical rules that pastors and church leaders talk about and expect all the members of the particular church or denomination to obey. But in a strange kind of way in almost every group there are also lists of unwritten extra-Biblical rules that develop...rules about fashion...rules about styles of music...rules about proper forms of recreation or lifestyle kinds of things. And unfortunately, as one preacher points out, what often happens is the people in the local church begin to make value judgments as to who the *real* Godly, spiritual people in the church are. Not so much based on whether or not their life conforms to the Bible, but more on the basis of whether or not their life conforms to the unwritten extra-Biblical kinds of rules that have surfaced in that particular fellowship.

Some start out their Christian lives very mechanically...very legalistically...very rule-oriented. They line up all the rules of Scripture which is a good thing, but they also embrace all the man-made rules of the church and are critical of other believers who don't. But lest any of you 'strong, mature' believers out there get the big head, the truth is we can sin in this area as well. We can embrace **WRONG** attitudes even when we are **RIGHT**. We can become judgmental and critical over the

truth and our adversary is more than willing to use our self-righteousness to hurt our weaker brothers.

Everyone has baggage from the past that affects their values and opinions on things. Remember this when dealing with what you would consider a 'weaker' Christian. Try to understand why they believe and behave as they do. You have to understand where these people are coming from and cut them some slack. Everyone has some sort of background that follows him or her like a shadow into the church. Paul, in the book of Romans - chapter 14, says that in view of this fact, we must accept them anyway. In other words we need to hold back judgment on disputable issues - matters on which the Scripture is not clear. We must not argue over non-essentials. The Kingdom of God is so much more than being right over non-essentials. As Paul says in verse 17, "*...the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*"

And you and I need to hear this principle because even in our day we still have these disputable issues - those deeply held convictions that can cause division if we are not very careful.

Should we home-school our kids or send them to public school? Is it okay for Christians to drink alcohol? Should Christians dance? Should ministers wear robes? Should ministers wear ties? Should women wear pants? Should Christians be compassionate Republicans or conservative Democrats? And so on. When we "bump into" a believer who has a non-essential conviction that we don't share - we need to accept them anyway. I like how J. B. Phillips puts it : **CONTINUED PG. 2**

Disputable Matters (continued)

“Welcome a man whose faith is weak, but not with the idea of arguing over his scruples.” Everyone has a heritage...so remind yourself of that before you get impatient or judgmental with someone else. Remember, UNITY and MINISTRY are much more important than DISPUTABLE matters!

Here’s a second thing to remember. It is wrong for us to judge each other on disputable matters because we don’t report to each other in the first place. God ALONE is the judge. *“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s...But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.” (Romans 14:10-13)* In short, Paul was trying to relieve the Christian community of the burden that comes from trying to determine who the spiritual all-stars are based on these non-essential external issues. Only God has the proper perspective to judge the human heart, He will judge all people in His perfect time. The strong must not judge the weak nor the weak the strong. That’s God’s job and it’s not a job that he shares with the likes of you and me.

Finally, let me add that Romans 14:19 says *“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.”* Edifying one another makes the church stronger and people stronger. One night at a campout, a dispute arose over some issue. One person said something negative about the other person and immediately almost in chorus all the other guys shouted out, “EDIFY! EDIFY!” I learned later that this was a custom in that group. They believed it was wrong to tear each other down and when anyone crossed that line they reminded them by saying, “EDIFY! EDIFY!” They believed Christians should, “...build up or shut up.” And they were right! Perhaps we should bring that custom back to Lighthouse...because unfortunately many of us are much better at tearing people down with our judgments and criticisms than we are at building them up. Here is an anonymous poem I came

across:

*“As I watched them tear a building down
A gang of men in a busy town
With a ho-heave-ho, and a lusty yell
They swung a beam and the side wall fell.
I asked the foreman, ‘Are these men skilled,
And the men you’d hire if you wanted to build?’
He gave a laugh and said, ‘No, indeed,
Just common labor is all I need.’
‘I can easily wreck in a day or two,
What builders have taken years to do.’
And I thought to myself, as I went my way
Which of these roles have I tried to play?
Am I a builder who works with care,
Measuring life by rule and square?
Am I shaping my work to a well-made plan
Patiently doing the best I can?
Or am I a wrecker who walks to town
Content with the labor of tearing down?
‘O Lord let my life and labors be
That which will build for eternity!’”*

Let’s not use disputable matters to hinder the Gospel of Christ.



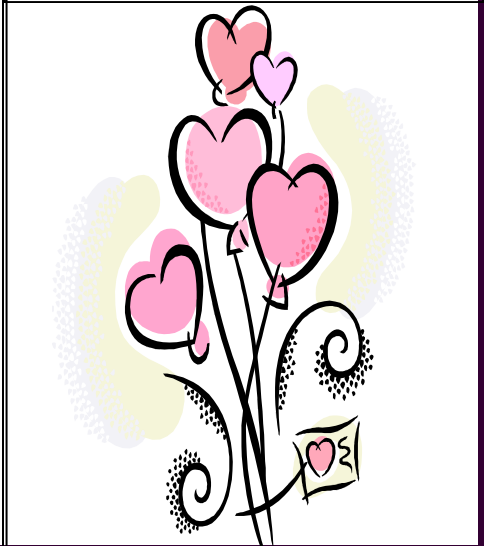
You’re Drinking Too Much Coffee When:

- You speed walk in your sleep.
- You answer the door before people knock.
- You sleep with your eyes open.
- You just completed your third sweater today, and you don’t know how to knit.
- You grind your coffee beans in your mouth.
- You can type sixty words a minute with your feet.
- Your Thermos is on wheels.
- You don’t even wait for the water to boil anymore.
- You soak your dentures in coffee overnight.

Praying For One Another

The Abundant Life Class has a ritual which involves picking a blue or pink slip of paper out of a bucket that’s passed by everyone each week. Those in attendance have their name printed on these slips. Men are to pick a blue slip and the ladies pick a pink one. That slip of paper gets tucked into Bibles, purses, or pockets as we make our way out of class. It is to remind us to pray for the name printed on that slip of paper all week. This little ritual was started eight years ago at the suggestion of a class member. It has been exciting and encouraging to hear the reports and stories from these little slips of paper. Just last week I saw a class member stick the name she had drawn into a paper clipped pile she had collected over the weeks and tuck them back into her purse. (I.e. they hadn’t been thrown away.) I personally have a pile of slips next to my bed that I add to each week. Several times I just pray through all of them briefly lifting up fellow class members to God. Sometimes while doing laundry, a slip will fall out of a pocket and I’ll just say a little prayer for the name on that slip right there in front of the washing machine. I personally have had many people tell me that they prayed for me in the week. How encouraging! We don’t take for granted this simple ritual of little pink and blue slips of paper. Neither should any of us take for granted when our name is mentioned for prayer or printed in the mid-week bulletin. It may be the difference in our week as our name is being spoken for to the Almighty God.

“Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.” Acts 26:5-6



Preparing For the Lord's Day

We would all agree that Sunday is the most important day of the week. Why? Because it's the Lord's day and we get to show Him our love by attending church and serving Him there. But why do so many of us arrive on Sunday morning late with bags under our eyes, grouchy or irritable, and yawn through the messages? I believe it's because we don't treat Sunday with its due reverence by the way we prepare for it throughout the week, especially on Saturday. We pack the day full of activities. We stay up too late on Saturday night watching a movie, playing games, or some other recreation. Then we crawl into bed exhausted only to wake up Sunday morning frazzled. We've made no preparations for what the kids are wearing. Clothes

aren't clean or ironed and we can't find little Johnny's shoes. Sunday afternoon's meal is an after thought. We're simply not prepared to walk out the door and rejoice in the fact that *'This is the day the Lord hath made.* We even find some way to rationalize our behavior and make an excuse as to why we're missing Sunday School.

I'm not saying that we can't have fun on Saturday but that we should begin preparing for Sunday earlier in the week. Laundry can be done for church clothes on Wednesday, shopping for Sunday's meal on Thursday, and by all means get the kids to bed on time Saturday night. Little children can prepare themselves for Sunday with enthusiastic reminders from Mom during the week. They can be

taught to lay their Sunday clothes out the night before. They can help Mom make Sunday's dessert the day before. I would suggest setting down some rules like no computer or television after 9PM. This will make the day run much smoother and give a healthier respect to the most important day of the week.

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." (Psalm 122:1)



Is God Willing?

Now unto Him that is ABLE to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think... Amen," (Eph. 3:20-21).

Every time I read this passage I say, "Yes, I know Lord, You are ABLE. I have the ability part down, but dear God, are You willing?" I know for a fact that He can do anything, I've seen that in the Bible and in my own life. God says He is able to answer my prayers but I want to know if He is 'willing' to answer my prayers. Is God willing to answer your prayers? Is God willing to use you to do great works for Him? Yes, I believe He is! The question is, "Are we willing to pray and keep praying? Are we willing to do great things for God?"

The entire Bible is a demonstration of God's ability and man's willingness. God never considers the ability of us because He knows we're unable to do anything. Jesus said in John 15:5 *"...for without me ye can do nothing."* But then He later said, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."* So God is not interested in our ability but our willingness. How else could a humble shoe salesman win a D.L. Moody to Christ? How else could a former marine pastor one of the most influential churches in southern California? How else could a divorced single parent be used of God in the ministry? How else could an untalented young lady learn to play the piano and become the church pianist? How else could a former drug addict be a bus captain? I could go on and on. God has taken ordinary, frail, and sinful people and used them because they were willing – not able! II Cor. 8:12 says *"For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath*

not." God didn't look at man and what he did not have. God said, "I want to know if you are willing?"

God wants us to stop attaching our willingness to our ability because that is exactly why nothing gets done. Rather, He wants us to attach our willingness to His ability! After all, He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Instead of trying to look at our ability and God's willingness, we should look at our willingness and God's ability.

God wants to know if we are willing to stay on our knees and pray, to get up early and stay up late, and work, and sweat, and love, and be taken advantage of and be ridiculed and used and more. God wants to know if we are willing to pay the price.

If God can do anything but fail, then why do marriages fail? Unwilling partners. Why do finances fail? Unwilling tithers. Why do families fall apart? Unwilling children and parents. Why do churches fail? Unwilling pastors and members.

What exactly does our willingness have to do with prayer? When we put our willingness with God's ability and say, "Here I am Lord," anything is possible. God's ability cannot be explained anymore than all the miracles of the Bible can be explained. But one thing is certain – God's ability is always manifested through man's willingness.

Keeping a Confidence

When you're making progress toward developing an intimate friendship, it's crucial that you keep a confidence. Nothing will ruin a potential relationship quicker than a loose tongue. The only information you should be revealing to a third party is the type that passes the following criteria:

1. Is it true?
2. Is it kind?
3. Is it necessary to tell?
4. Is it beneficial to all concerned?
5. Do you have the other person's permission to share the story?

Use these five questions as your rule of thumb when you're tempted to divulge someone else's business. If the answer to any or all of these five questions is no, you're just asking for trouble if you pass it along.

By Joanne Wallace from "Especially for a Woman"



Kindness is the language the blind can see and the deaf can hear.

STRESS BUSTERS

1. DEVELOP ORDER ~ Tidy up. Put things away. Toss clutter. You can restore a sense of calm to a room with a thirty-minute "sort and dump."
2. DIVERT YOUR FOCUS ~ Diversions give the mind a break from problem solving and burden bearing. It is impossible to be consumed with worry when something else is captivating your interest.
3. DIFFUSE ~ Push the pressure out of your body through twenty minutes of aerobic exercise.
4. DEBRIEF ~ Talk out your tension with a safe and trusted friend.
5. DIVERSIFY ~ Change channels in your brain. Problem solving, is more effective when the mind frequently rests from a problem rather than obsessing on it continuously.
6. DELIBERTLY REST~ Schedule several five-minute slots during the day to "let down" and slow the mind and body. Listen to relaxing music. Pray and meditate on scriptures that soothe the soul.
7. DEAL WITH UNFINISHED BUSINESS ~ Make amends whenever possible. Grant forgiveness rather than nursing grudges.
8. DECIDE TO TRUST ~ One of the best prescriptions for fear is to say, "God, I choose to trust you."
9. DEDICATE YOURSELF TO THE BASICS ~ To see clearly in the midst of blinding stress. Sleep eight hours a night. Eat well-balanced meals. Exercise twenty minutes three times a week. AND, don't forget to read your Bible and pray everyday!
10. DISENGAGE ~ When overwhelmed, step back, buy yourself some time and stop trying so hard. Everything doesn't have to be fixed today.
11. DIG IN ~ Avoidance heightens anxiety. Evaluate what can be done and do it. Don't get stuck in the quicksand of an "all or nothing" approach.
12. DON'T BE A "TYPE E" PERSON ~ No one was designed to be Everything to Everybody. Only God can fill that job description.

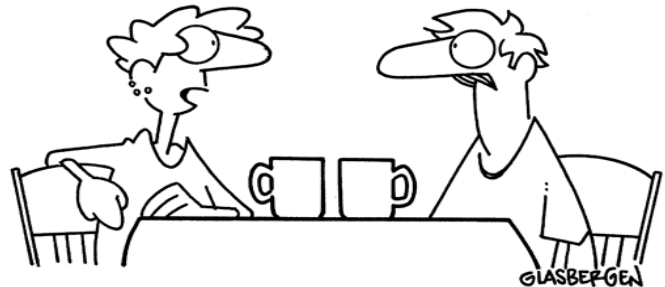


PAM VREDEVELT
LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR

EIGHT STRATEGIES FOR THE SECOND HALF OF MARRIAGE

1. Let go of past marital disappointments, forgive each other, and commit to making the rest of your marriage the best.
2. Create a marriage that is partner-focused rather than child-focused.
3. Maintain effective communication that allows you to express your deepest feeling, joys, and concerns.
4. Build a deeper friendship and enjoy your spouse. Be a little wacky. What can you do to jolt your old patterns.
5. Renew romance and restore a pleasurable sexual relationship.
6. Adjust to changing roles with aging parents and adult children.
7. Evaluate where you are on your spiritual pilgrimage.
8. Get in shape. Get enough exercise. Eat better and get enough sleep. An annual physical is a good investment in the health of your marriage.

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"Let's compromise. You do everything I say
and I'll say everything you do."

MARRIAGE ADVICE FROM 1886

- Let your love be stronger than your hate or anger.
- Learn the wisdom of compromise, for it is better to bend a little than to break.
- Believe the best rather than the worst.
- People have a way of living up or down to your opinion of them.
- Remember that true friendship is the basis for any lasting relationship. The person you choose to marry is deserving of the courtesies and kindness you bestow on your friends.
- Please hand this down to your children: The more things change the more they are the same.