

# MM

MARRIAGE MATTERS  
POINTERS

FROM JEALOUSY TO  
SPIRITUAL GROWTH

A FOCUS ON MARRIAGE AT FELLOWSHIP



# FROM JEALOUSY TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH

From an Anonymous FBC Member

I grew up in a Christian home surrounded by acceptance and security from loving parents who took us to church and taught us about God's great love. I only remember a few small instances of disagreements between my parents and if there were more, they must have kept them away from us. I was blessed to have a peaceful and pleasant childhood

Jason (not his real name) grew up in a broken home with non-Christian parents, and did not know acceptance and security like I did. He understood that God knew everything and created everything, but it ended there. Jason's father left their home when he was only eight and he remembers clearly the fights and arguments that took place in their home. His dad left his mom for another woman with whom his mom had a friendship.

Jason loved both parents. Even though his dad left home, he still wanted to please his dad and spend time with him, but when he came around, arguments often began between his parents. He felt like no matter what he did, he would make one of them unhappy.

For example, one day Jason's dad asked him if he wanted to go to the beach with him. He jumped at the chance. Jason did not know that his dad would also take his girlfriend along, but his mom knew. As usual, an argument started and escalated to the point where Jason began yelling "I don't even want to go to the beach! Forget about it!" Sure he wanted to go, but not if it would cause the two people he loved to argue and hate each other.

In his junior and high school years Jason missed the influence of his father and began to rebel. He began to take drugs, party, and pursue girls. His former involvement in sports began to take a back seat to drinking and drugs. He only did enough in school to pass, and was often at odds with his mom for getting in the way of his lifestyle. In his mind,

When he was about 14, his dad remarried, moved to another state and became a believer. His visits to his dad's house began to include discussions about God. At age 16, Jason's dad told him about the end times. He was sure that he didn't want to be around for the judgments of God, and that night, he understood the gospel and the penalty that Christ paid for his sin, and believed. After he was saved, he returned to his home town but continued his former lifestyle. He had very little teaching at this point. There were even times where he tried to share the gospel with some of his friends, but it had not yet affected his lifestyle.

The summer between his junior and senior year of high school, Jason spent with his dad because his mom was losing control of him and wanted his dad to fix him. The summer was filled with learning new things about God from his dad and from the church they were attending. The youth ministry at this church had a big impact on him. And even though he would get stoned before he arrived at youth group, he was beginning to grow in his relationship with God. At the end of the summer he was afraid to go back to his old friends where there was no godly influence.

His mom was not happy about it, but Jason decided to stay with his dad and complete his last year of high school there. The year would prove to be a year of great struggle and great growth. His stepmom was suspicious of his drug use, and caught him red-handed. His dad came home and offered two options. "Do you want a whoopin' or do you want to take me on in a fight?" Jason's dad was no match for his 17 year old son. Jason was filled with conviction and opted for the belt. He had also given some drugs to his stepsister, and when his stepmom discovered this, she came down hard on him for coming into their home and ruining her daughter.

Jason finished his final year of high school and spent the next year working. He also took evening classes at a nearby Christian college and his relationship with God grew. Things were still not always easy at home. His dad spent his time trying to appease his spiritually immature wife and again had little time for Jason.

Jason and I met in college and fell in love quickly. He was handsome, genuine and loved the Lord. We both had the same goals for our future. We began dating, were engaged and married within a year. We were both immature in our faith and I had idealistic ideas about marriage. Struggles

did, I didn't understand why things were not as smooth as I thought they would be. I thought that all my needs would be met, and it would be just as easy to meet his needs and we would live happily ever after.

Because Jason had witnessed unfaithfulness in his parents' relationship, and had spent many years living an unfaithful, lustful life himself, he feared that my heart may turn from him at any moment. He knew that unfaithfulness begins in the heart, and he began immediately to question my every move. When I put on make-up or dressed cute, he asked me who I was trying to impress. Whose attention are you trying to attract? His view of girls as a teen did not help matters because he figured that every guy out there would be lusting after his wife (the way that he had lusted after many others).

I felt he was attacking my motives and was shocked by his questions. Why would he think these things? I got defensive and angry. I didn't think it was wrong for me to look nice, but suddenly I felt guilty for it. He made me feel like I was a terrible wife because he viewed me as wanting to attract attention and lure men to me. This was not my intention, but he made me feel like I should see that this was the message I was sending to the world.

There were many things he did not want me to do, or places he did not want me to go alone. He got angry with me if I talked to or made eye contact with another man. His accusations were, however, very inconsistent. We sometimes made friends with other couples, and it was fine when we spent time with them, but other times it was not. I could tell the moment he thought I was too friendly or did the wrong thing and would feel very uncomfortable and guilty and I had no clue what I had just done.

I wanted to be myself and friendly to everyone, but I began to be afraid. I worried about when the next convincing accusation would come. When it did, I defended my actions but he would say, "Look, I know what I saw you do." What was I to say to that? These incidents occurred several times each week and it was controlling our marriage and consuming us.

Each time these things happened we talked them out. I would admit my insensitivity and he would ask me to forgive him for these feelings that he had. They would come up so quickly and control his thoughts and mind that he could not stop them. He was ashamed each time it happened and didn't want to admit to me the weakness, but he did anyway.

When I took my wedding vows, I knew this relationship was for life, and I had no interests in other men. It never occurred to me that he would worry about my commitment. I just felt the attacks and tried hard to curb my behavior so I would not be accused, but there was no way I could predict what would set him off. I tried to do all the right things, and became self-righteous. “He is unreasonable. I’m right. He does not love me like Christ loves the church.”

Jason and I were both growing in our relationship to the Lord and as we grew, he became more willing to share with me his struggles in these areas and why he responded the way he did. He did love me. He had a great fear of losing me and was trying to hold on to me. He was using manipulation and control to keep me close. His childhood insecurities had formed how he reacted. He began to learn about his security in Christ and that he was accepted in Christ, made a new creature and did not have to yield to these thoughts and fears. These truths began to take hold in his life and he shared them with me, and I began to understand about my fleshly, self-righteous reactions.

I knew that my responsibility as a wife was to honor my husband and submit to him. I wrestled with the challenge because I felt falsely accused. Often I felt sorry for myself. My temptation was to tell someone and get them to sympathize with me and tell me that I was right and he was wrong. But I had a check in my heart about that. “Wouldn’t that be dishonoring to my husband?” The real question for me was, “Is God big enough to be my advocate?” Could I trust Him to bring us together? Wasn’t there a work that God wanted to do in both of us? Could I trust Him to do it, even when I was convinced that it was only Jason that needed to change, and I was doing everything right? What did God have in this for me?

One day after years of struggle, during another fight with tears and frustration, he said that he needed to know that I only desired him, and no one else. “What? Of course I do.” I thought that was what I communicated every time I disputed his accusations! But he explained to me that I was defending myself which made him feel more insecure.

Finally, a breakthrough! I would have never been able to figure this out on my own. It did not change things immediately though because my reaction to his struggle had become a knee jerk reaction, and I quickly responded out

of self-defense before I could stop and think about him and what his heart was longing for.

Again he apologized each time and we talked. He wanted so badly to just quit thinking this way, but he couldn't just choose to stop. It would overwhelm him like a flash flood and was in the midst of raging feelings before he even knew what was happening. Slowly God began to give me compassion for him as I thought about what it would be like to constantly fear that the one you loved most would leave you.

Anything that involved other people taking my time or energy threatened him. This included friendships with other women, and even sometimes our kids. When a person is insecure in relationships it affects a marriage in ways you would not expect. It can seem like an attack or attempts to control, when really it is longing to be loved and accepted. Jealousy reared its head even as I spent time with the kids because he feared being left out and that feeling of rejection is so strong. I did not always understand this and did not always respond correctly. I knew that I had been called to honor my husband but sometimes my focus was on his actions which I resented, instead of on the Lord as my security.

At this time, I began to ask God to show me what honor and respect looked like. Slowly He showed me that I may need to give up friends to show him that he was more important than anyone else in my life. God also helped me to see that I needed to intentionally help build the relationship between Jason and the kids. I knew that the kids needed to see my respect for him to follow my lead. I tried to help the relationship our kids had with him. I tried to support his decisions, even when I felt he had been harsh with them, because I wanted our kids to honor him as I knew they should.

I did not always succeed in my efforts and failed every time my focus was upon my circumstances. Like Peter when he walked out to Jesus on the water, he became overwhelmed by the storm when he focused on it, instead of on the only one who had control of the storm. God knew before Jason and I married that these would be our issues and he was sufficient to take us through them. I knew that God had brought both of us a long way, and I was learning what it meant to be a helper to my husband.

Growing up, I thought a helpmate was someone who cooked meals and kept the home neat. I learned that God would have more for me than that.

It meant that I should honor him as God told me to, have compassion for him in his struggles and do what I could to comfort him and most of all love and support him.

When our children were young, it was very challenging for me because of all the demands of having three kids very close together. Every night I would fall into bed and want nothing more than to sleep. Naturally my husband's desires were different than mine, and I struggled with being selfish with my body. Many times I stood my ground and failed to be the wife God wanted me to be, which aroused the rejection issue again. God's Word clearly states that husband and wife are to engage in sex regularly so they will not be tempted. And who could blame him for feeling the way he did? If I had wanted a hug from him or a kiss as he left for work and he refused, how would I feel? My body is not my own. I have given it to my husband to be in unity with him as long as we both shall live.

Jason was afraid that people didn't like him, including my parents. I kept telling him that they did, but he was hard to convince. It made me really glad that I had not shared my struggles with my mom or dad as it would have driven a wedge in their relationship which could have been permanent. I did not want to dishonor him before my parents and cause them to view him in a bad light. I cared what people thought about him and I wanted to increase the world of people that he could trust, not tear it down.

Jason's fleshly responses were more glaring than mine. It would have been quite easy for me to hide behind my self-righteous attitude and point only to his sin, and others would have agreed with me! But God in His grace spoke to me and showed me my own part which was much harder to find. "The heart is deceitful above all things, who can know it?" Other people sure don't know it, especially if they are only hearing my side of the story. I also discovered that even I don't know it. I thought I did, but I was wrong. I was not as holy as I would like to believe I was.

If I had the attitude that I have a right to not be wrongly accused and treated him accordingly I would have increased his insecurities and complicated his struggle. But by God's grace, He revealed to me this stronghold and as Jason's helpmate, enabled me to respond and function in ways that uplift and strengthen him so he can overcome them rather than be overtaken by them.

There is only one relationship that God calls us to “one flesh” in and that is husband/wife. We are called to raise our children to mature and leave home, but our marriage is permanent. Are we doing more to nurture our kids or our marriage? It is easy for moms to put more time and effort into their children’s lives while their husbands wither and die without notice because they should not be so needy. I contend that most of these unequal relationships where one spouse is from a rough background and one is from a good Christian family, there will be these same types of issues. Although each one will look different, I believe we can help these relationships if first we are aware of them.

The struggles we have today are much fewer and farther between. They still have their root in the same ground where they began, but God has taken these two people with ugly flesh, given us new life and has taught us how to live more in the Spirit. After 30 years of marriage, I think he is finally convinced that I won’t leave him, but there are still things that I give up to be sensitive to him. My life is not my own. Looking back I see that without these issues my natural independence and self-sufficiency could have driven us to a functional coexistence, but God wanted something more for us, and he had to send us into the stormy sea to teach us dependence on Him alone. God wanted us to have an intense love for each other that glorified Him and gave Him the credit.

I believe these issues, though difficult, have led to a much deeper love and respect and appreciation for each other than a marriage marked by ease. I need to remember every day that without God I can do nothing. With God all things are possible. We need not take things into our own hands and demand change from our spouse, all the while ignoring our own sin. Will God bless you while you sin, dishonoring your husband, or the marriage bed? Faith in God is following God’s plan for marriage and trusting Him for the outcome.

Sure you can put the blame on him because he is in sin, but God’s work begins in you. Why? Because the barrier of pride and self-righteousness in you must be broken. As long as you still believe you are doing the right thing and he is wrong, your pride will stand. Many Christians are swimming in dangerous waters in the wisdom of human reasoning and worldly logic, but God’s ways are not our ways and His ways are worth finding out.

