

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

March 6, 2015

Spiritual Ponderings

21 Undeniable Secrets of Marriage

Part II

I hope that you have been enjoying these insights or “secrets” about building strong marriages in which I believe we can all use to build strong relationships. Dr. Allen Hunt’s book *The 21 Undeniable Secrets of Marriage* has been a good resource to help us ponder what it takes to have a good marriage and other healthy relationships. Quotes from his book will be in bold and my commentary or reflections will be regular font.

12. The Secret of Separation: Cleaving means cleaving.

**When cleaving occurs, two things (or in this case two people) combine so intensely that it is almost impossible to separate them. They are passionately connected to each other. They are not merely roommates or friends of convenience.**

Here is one of my favorite poems about marriage: I didn't marry you because you were perfect. I didn't even marry you because I loved you. I married you because you gave me a promise. That promise made up for your faults. And the promise I gave you made up for mine. Two imperfect people got married and it was the promise that made the marriage. And when our children were growing up, it wasn't a house that protected them; and it wasn't our love that protected them - it was that promise.

**In the same way, for a marriage to really thrive, it must stand on its own. If either set of in-laws meddles, hovers, and controls; the new marriage will struggle to stand on its own. Either the man did not fully leave his mother and father, or the woman’s parents are preventing him from truly cleaving to his new wife. In either example, the new marriage will be weak and dependent rather than strong and fully independent.**

All relationships are going to have their problem but if a relationship is going to last the test of time both people in it need to learn to work together to solve their problems rather than looking outside the relationship for someone else to fix it.

**The deepest lessons for marriage often come through the University of Hard Knocks. Some things simply cannot be learned in a book. Some things you will learn only when you live them.**

Facing conflicts with a friend only strengthens the friendship.

13. The Secret of Insiders: When in doubt, turn toward your mate.

**Don’t marry someone you can live with; marry someone you can’t live without. That was the secret of the best friend. In the same way, if you have a best friend outside the marriage, know that you may well be entering treacherous waters.**

One of the first pieces of advice I give engage couples is that “if you cannot live without them then don’t live with them because God wants to independent people to enter into the Sacrament of Marriage. Even though it sounds completely opposite of Dr. Hunt’s rule I think we both mean the same thing. Don’t settle and marry just anyone so that you can be married. As Catholics we believe that God, if He is calling you to the Sacrament of Marriage, has made just one person in the rest of the world to be your spouse. Don’t settle for anyone else. God wants what and who is best for you. He knows who it is that will help you become your best self.

14. The Secret of Attention and Affection: Attention and affection work for a marriage like oxygen and water work for the human body.

**Attention and affection work for a marriage like oxygen and water work for the human body.**

Most marriage do not end out of malice but rather out of neglect. Dr. Gottman had this to say: “One of the saddest reasons a marriage dies is that neither spouse recognizes its value until it is too late. Only after the papers have been signed, the furniture divided, and separate apartments rented to the execs realize how much they really gave up when they gave up on each other. Too often a good marriage is taken for granted rather than given the nurturing and respect it deserves and desperately needs.”

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Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

March 13, 2015

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Part II

Most of us can be better at creating healthy relationships. Dr. Allen Hunt's book *The 21 Undeniable Secrets of Marriage* can be a good guide for anyone wishing to develop healthy relationships but especially those desiring a happy and healthy marriage. Quotes from his book will be in bold and my commentary or reflections will be regular font.

15. The Secret of Women: Be A Woman: your husband needs that.

**"No matter how much our culture tries to make women into men, and tells us women that we can do it all, there are still times when a woman needs a man to be a man. To carry the load. To be the heavy with the kids. To stand up."** – Anita Hunt.

Here is another personal pet peeve of mine. I hate it when people wish me "Happy Father's Day" on Father's Day because I know that while I am a spiritual father, Hallmark (or whoever made up the holiday) did not intend to celebrate spiritual fathers on Father's Day. I know that there are many similarities between my spiritual fatherhood and the regular fatherhood my brothers live out and both should be celebrated. We should take time though to celebrate what is good in each. I bring this up because I think sometimes we try to down play the difference in gender instead of celebrating them. We are all equal but we are all different. We as Catholic believe in a Trinity, three equal persons but different.

**Men and women are not the same; High school biology makes that plain. Of Course men and women are equal; we're all made in the image of god. However equal does not mean same. We were made for each other, not like each other. God made men and women to be much the same, yet significantly and wonderfully different.**

Women cannot be equal to men if men are not willing to step up and be the fathers that God is calling them to be. Women cannot be equal to men if they have to deny a major part of who they are through contraception in order to keep up with men.

16. The Secret of Men: Be a man, your wife needs that.

**In all our efforts to make men and women the same, we have forgotten how men and women are designed to complement each other.**

Men normally bring three P's to a relationship (protect, provide, and push) and women normally bring the three N's to a relationship nourish; nurture, and nest (provide order). Can families survive without a mother or a father? Yes, but these should be the exceptions that make us appreciate the role of mother and father all the more.

17. The Secret of Sacrifice: Sacrifice is usually difficult and irksome: do it anyway.

**Love is best expressed in sacrifice.**

If you are not willing to sacrifice for a person then you really do not love that person.

18. The Secret of Children: Love, in its very nature gives and creates

**Saint Augustine said children were one of the three goods (or blessings) of marriage, right alongside the blessing of fidelity and the beauty of the unbreakable bond. How could it be otherwise? How does God show His love? By creating the universe and by creating new life. The Holy Spirit is the Lord, the Giver of Life. The love of God creates new life. So too will love in a marriage produce new life. This is the secret of children.**

Our world teaches us that we should see children as an economic agent good or bad. God and the Bible see children always as a gift and a blessing.

Creating new life is just a natural out flowing of love. Love gives, love creates, love welcomes, love nurtures, and love nourishes new life.

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Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

March 20, 2015

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Part II

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19. The Secret of Life: When two become one, that "one" has its own life.

**When children arrive, the family grows into a new dimension all its own. The secret of life moves from the couple itself to the now-expanding family. No family consists merely of the individual members. Just as the one couple has a life in its own right, so too does the family unit take on its own existence as a whole.**

When a couple gets married, it is no longer about what is good for the individual but rather what is good for the family. This is especially true when children become a part of the family.

20. The Secret of Forgiveness: The most important word in a marriage and it's not love.

**What's the most important word in a marriage? Think about it: the single-most crucial word for your marriage. What would that be? Perhaps it is *love*. Or you might think the crucial word is *faithfulness*. Then again, trust is an important word. And so is *honesty*. *Commitment* is too. But the most important word in a marriage is forgiveness. And along with forgiveness comes its spouse, grace.**

The most important thing I look for in a friendship is a person's willingness to forgive because I know that I am going to make mistakes. In a good relationship and thus in a good marriage, forgiveness flows more freely than in bad relationships and marriages. I also know that I am more willing to strive to be better when someone forgives me than when someone punishes me for a mistake.

**Show me a marriage teeming with forgiveness and grace and I will show you a healthy thriving marriage.**

Refusing to forgive and holding onto a grudge is like putting up roadblocks up on the roadway to happiness.

**Forgiveness, however, needs to occur in the little things each day every bit as much as in the big things.**

We have to forgive the little things as much as the big things. We should also try to forgive as quick as possible.

**Of course, you reduce the number of occasions for forgiveness by developing healthy conflict resolution skills.**

The following is some things I try to remember when resolving conflict.

"My fifth principle (practice good conflict resolution) comes down to having good manners" summarized Dr. Gottman.

1. Complain but don't blame 2. Make statements that start with "I" instead of "You" 3. Describe what is happening, don't evaluate or judge. 4. Be clear. 5. Be polite 6. Be appreciative 7. Don't store things up.

Plus the prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen

21. The Secret of Eight: When you struggle focus on the 8

For you and me, the question is how to have a marriage permeated with joy, even on our worst days. The apostle Paul describes how to get to that kind of life: “Finally, brothers whatever is true, whatever is honorable whatever just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, what is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (Philippians 4:8)

Remember when you find yourself in conflict with your spouse or another person to always try to behave like Christ

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Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

March 27, 2015

Spiritual Ponderings

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Part II

Last week we finished up a seven week look at Dr. Allen Hunt’s book *The 21 Undeniable Secrets of Marriage*. Today, I would like to look at a tool that he offers the reader of his book to help facilitate forgiveness between husbands and wives. I believe this tool can be use to save many marriages and if modified correctly can be a good guide for anyone wishing to develop healthy relationships. Quotes from his book will be in bold and my commentary or reflections will be regular font.

**As a couple, sit facing each other. Join hands. Look one another in the eye. Take turns doing the following exercise.**

**Let the wife go first.**

**As you look at your husband say, “Please forgive me for \_\_\_\_\_,” and then complete the sentence. Do not add an “if” or a “but.” No explanations—just a simple apology for something done or said that you regret. It is best if this is for something from the past week rather than dredging up issues from the distant past. Starting anew with a fresh breeze of grace.**

**Husband, look at your wife, simply say, “I forgive you.” Add nothing else. Just receive her apology and offer forgiveness.**

**Begin again.**

**Now reverse the roles with the husband apologizing and the wife forgiving...**

**Resist the temptation to expand the conversation in this exercise. There will be plenty of time later to have longer discussions. The goal right here and now is simply to learn to apologize and to forgive well. No more, no less.**

The following is a prayer for couples that I recommend couples.

It takes three to make love, not two: you, your spouse, and God. Without God people only succeed in bringing out the worst in one another...” – Archbishop Fulton Sheen

This is a cool method for engaged and married couples to use to pray together.

1. If possible sit in a way that allows you to face each other. If possible hold hands.
2. While looking at each other the guy begins: “Dear God, I thank you for my fiancé/spouse and I am grateful for her (name 1-3 things you are grateful for). Please help me become the husband she needs me to be by giving me the grace to (name 1-3 things that you would like to improve about yourself).
3. Pause for a moment of silence. It is important at this time that the woman just to receive her fiancé/spouse’s prayer.
4. Then it is time for the woman to pray: “Dear God, I thank you for my fiancé/spouse and I am grateful for him (name 1-3 things you are grateful for). Please help me become the wife he needs me to be by giving me the grace to (name 1-3 things that you would like to improve about yourself).
5. Pause for a moment of silence. It is important at this time for the man just to receive his fiancé/ spouse’s prayer
6. At this time allow each other to pray for other things that may be on your mind i.e. safe travel, sick relative, etc.
7. Conclude the petitions with the Our Father.

8. Recite together one of the closing prayers

Closing Prayer 1 (If Married):

O God, who in creating the human race willed that man and wife should be one and have joined us, your servants, in a bond of inseparable love and have united us in the covenant of marriage, help us to make our love fruitful so that we may become by your grace witness of charity itself. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, you Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen

Closing Prayer 2 (If Engaged):

Please be attentive to our prayers, O Lord and in your kindness pour out your grace on us your servants. As we prepare to come before your altar together and to be united by you in an unbreakable bond of love and peace, please confirm us in love for one another and for you. We ask through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen

