

The Journey – Part Three - Understanding

by Lloyd Biddle

Understand Your Spouse

Likewise you husbands, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

1 Peter 3:7

This is the third part of my Journey series. This month, I will cover "U" for understanding.

- J - is for Joy
- O - is for Oath
- U - is for Understanding
- R - is for Refresh
- N - is for Needs
- E - is for Exalt
- Y - is for Yoked

It is vitally important for you to take great interest in your spouse so that you know them well and can live in harmony with them. When I first starting dating Debbie in the summer of 1987, there were some things I learned about her very quickly. Perhaps the most important thing I came to understand is that at the core of her being, Debbie is a woman whose passion is to worship God in song. Although she lived and worked in Schaumburg, IL, she was a member of the Thompson Community Singers, a Chicago-

based gospel choir. She would attend a weekly 2-hour rehearsal every Wednesday and spend many weekends traveling to engagements with the choir across the country. Fast forward, nearly 22 years later, and not only is Debbie a member of our church choir and praise team (she is fond of saying, "I would sing every service if they would let me."), she has her own solo music ministry that takes her to various churches throughout the country to lead worship or serve as a guest soloist.

In addition, she sings with a Christian big band here in Madison called Highway to Heaven. Singing accompanied by a full orchestra is a tremendous privilege and joy for her. The band practices about once a week on Tuesday's when they are preparing for engagements. Recently, I asked Debbie why she joined the big band. She said: "During the week, I am busy doing all the things necessary to run the house. I get the boys off to school, help with their homework, cook, clean, wash clothes and organize. I do a lot of things for my family and the church, but I sing with Highway to Heaven just for me. I consider it like a hobby and a release from the ordinary responsibilities of life".

One of Debbie's favorite verses is the following: "I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of Him shall be sweet. I will be glad in the LORD" (Psalm 104:33-34 KJV). Singing praises to God brings meaning and purpose to her life. Therefore, it is vitally important that I encourage her in her life's calling. I try to do this in a variety of ways. First, I try to be her biggest fan. I want her to hear from me that her music is excellent and that she is reaching the hearts of people with God's message. I want to accompany her

as often as possible as she travels to minister. Secondly, I want to support her ministry financially, so I have funded her first two recordings. Thirdly, I want to support her by giving her the time she needs to do the work. That means I need to be home to tend to the children when she goes to rehearsals or engagements that we can't all attend. I need to understand when things around the house are a bit out of order while she is devoting time to a specific project involving her music ministry. Fourthly, I support her by letting her know when she needs to pull back from her music ministry, to tend to her own personal needs and the needs of our family. She wants to do so much in her music ministry that she needs someone to coach her about life balance.

Wives, do you understand your husbands? What are his heart's desires, his dreams and his goals? What are you doing to help him reach them? Are you his biggest fan and sometimes a coach or confidant or are you something less?

There may be a lot of people who know your spouse - his parents, siblings, other relatives, friends, co-workers, members of your local church and a vast array of others. But it is your privilege and responsibility to know your spouses best of all. We must know our spouses in a holistic, 360-degree manner. I need to let me wife into every aspect of my life and she needs to let me in everywhere as well. The more you let your spouse into your private world, the more intimate your relationship will become. Whereas it may be appropriate to talk about leaving work at work and keeping your friends out of the details of your marriage, this is not appropriate thinking when it comes to your spouse. I have heard husband's

say, for instance, "I don't let her know every detail of how I manage the money" and I have heard wives say, "I have to keep my own private checking accounts just in case he starts acting like a fool". These kinds of secrets and lies sow the seeds of discord in a marriage. It would be much more effective for spouses to work out their budget or financial issues openly and cooperatively. By not doing so, couples create individualism in their marriage and not unity.

But when you are transparent with your spouse and continually growing in your knowledge of them you can:

- i) Help them
- ii) Support their dreams and ambitions
- iii) Pray more strategically for them and your marriage
- iv) Affirm and encourage them
- v) Get your unmet needs on the table and addressed
- vi) Gently correct them when they get off track

As you go from being married 1 year to 5, 10, 20, 40+ years, it critically important that you understand that your spouse is changing physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. As their spouse, it is our high privilege and responsibility to be an excellent helpmate and traveling companion for them every step of life's journey. Study them and show yourself approved as God's perfect choice as their mate.

Next month, we'll explore the fourth letter of the journey acrostic, **R** for **Refresh**.