

Marital Strife



than I should be, and my wife and I snap at—or ignore—each other, I sometimes sense a cold coming on. (Excuse me while I sneeze.)

By Rusty Wright

Is Marriage Good for Your Health?’ asked The New York Times headline. It depends, says current research. If you’re married, being happily married seems to matter most.

For years, scientists have known that married people tend to be healthier and live longer than the unmarried. But recent research indicates that the quality of the marriage may be what counts. People in troubled relationships can end up having more health problems than the never married. So learn to fight fair.

Stress and Your Immune System

Stress and unresolved conflict can weaken the immune system. Hmm. Maybe that’s why, when I’m less kind

Or when I interrupt her by trying to finish her sentences—especially when my assumptions of what she would say are incorrect—her icy (she says ‘wounded’) silence makes my neck hot and my stomach tight.

The New York Times article¹ surveyed contemporary research on relationships and health. Pneumonia, surgery, cancer, and heart attacks are rarer among marrieds than unmarrieds. But according to the newspaper: ‘One recent study suggests that a stressful marriage can be as bad for the heart as a regular smoking habit’.

The article quotes marriage historian Stephanie Coontz: ‘It is the relationship, not the institution, that is key’.

Newlywed Games

The *New York Times* article reported on a novel experiment by Ronald

Glaser and Jan Kiecolt-Glaser at Ohio State University College of Medicine, who arranged for 90 newlywed couples to have their blood drawn during discussions of potentially volatile issues, such as housework, sex, and in-laws. Sure enough, relationship hostility saw immune-system declines. A subsequent study saw marital hostility correlate with slower healing of skin wounds.

The message: spousal hostility can negatively affect your marriage and your body. ‘Try harder to make [the relationship] better’, advises University of Chicago sociologist Linda J. Waite. ‘If you learn...how to manage disagreement early’, she says in the article, ‘then you can avoid the decline in marital happiness that follows from the drip, drip of negative interactions’.

and Your Health

My ten-year marriage to my wife has been terrific. But like any couple, we have to work through our differences. One evening recently, Meg and I went to bed with a dispute unresolved. The next morning, we had some business in a downtown office building. During a break, I found myself privately consulting a very Good Book to remind myself how to be a better husband.

Wise Words

Some of its simply Divine advice:

Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry.²

You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires.³

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behaviour. Instead, be kind to each other, tender hearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.⁴

Words, of course, affect the emotional tone of discussions. University of Utah psychologist Timothy W. Smith found that among couples married an average of 36 years, arguments that lacked any warmth—or that emphasised controlling language—were associated with increased heart risk. 'Difficulties in marriage seem to be nearly universal', notes Smith in *The New York Times*. But, as my wife observes, nastiness need not be.

So, conflict is inevitable, but fight fair. It's better for your relationship and your health.

Notes

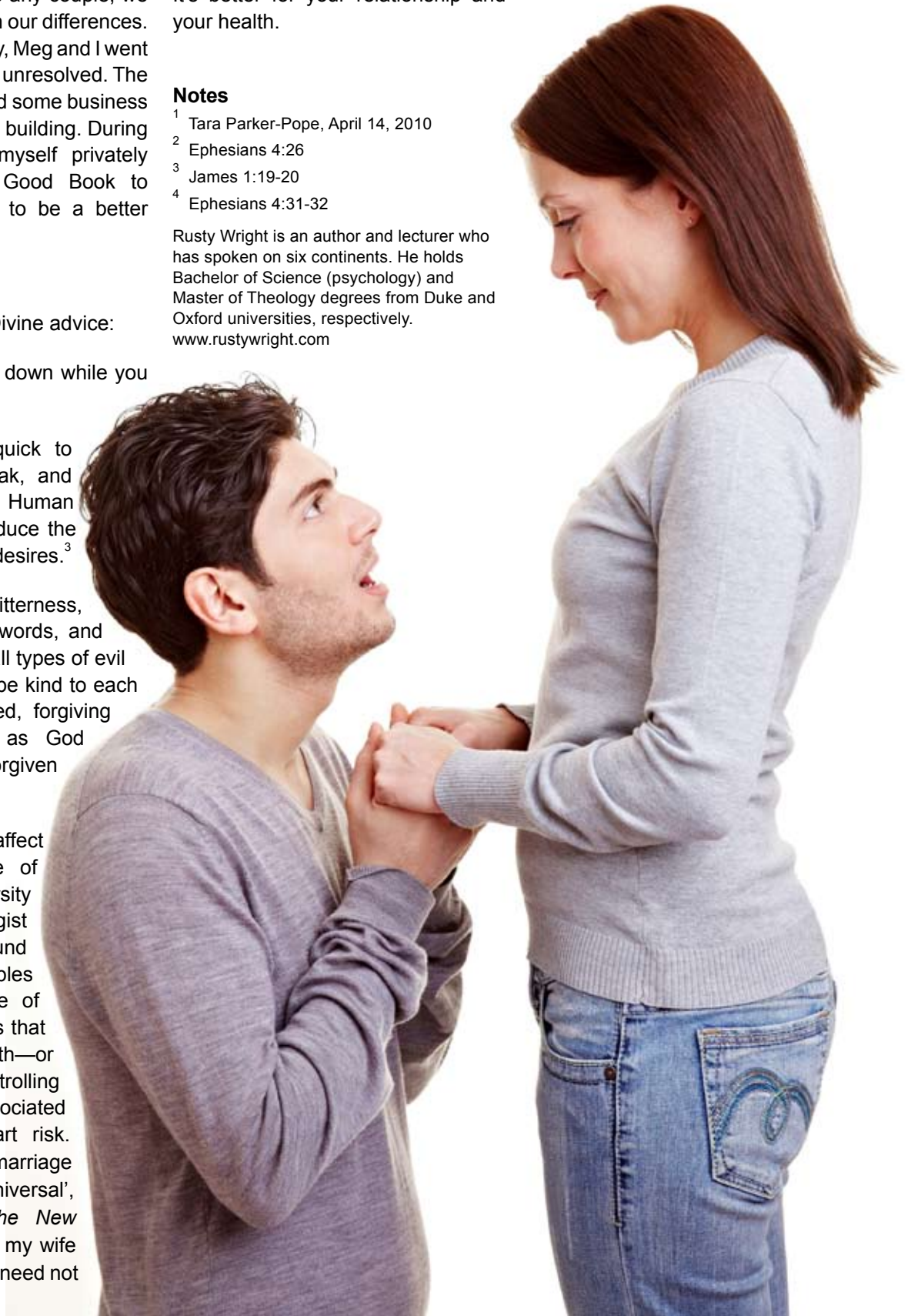
¹ Tara Parker-Pope, April 14, 2010

² Ephesians 4:26

³ James 1:19-20

⁴ Ephesians 4:31-32

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The Finer— and Finest—Things in Life



By Chris Widener

In America, we have a saying: the finer things in life. These are the things that most people talk about when they are speaking of things of high quality. In fact, much of that which propels people to pursue success, particularly financial success, is the desire to participate in the finer things in life.

Let's face it, increased finances enable us to do more things and enjoy things that we otherwise would not be able to afford. And we should consider that a blessing.

I am at a stage where my wife and I, and our kids, can enjoy some of the finer things in life. It hasn't always been that way. I think sometimes it is best to have to go years of getting by so that we appreciate more fully the finer things in life when we are able to experience them. I am thankful for where I am.

Who can argue against the beauty of a fine painting? Who doesn't love the smell and feel of leather furniture? Who doesn't enjoy driving a well-

engineered car? Who doesn't dream of the softness and warmth of a Cashmere sweater? Who doesn't like a nice watch that can be passed on to your son or daughter someday? All of these are common symbols of the finer things in life, and indeed

they are.

There is only one possible pitfall that I have found in the pursuit of the finer things in life. It is common that many fall into this trap. It is this: while pursuing the finer things in life, we often become so engrained, so focused in the pursuit, that we do not experience the finest things in life.

You see, for the most part, the finer things in life, as commonly defined, cost money. And usually it takes a lot of time working to make the kind of money that enables us to experience the finer things in life. And in the pursuit of the money to enjoy the finer things in life, we are spending so much time that we are missing regular opportunities to enjoy the finest things in life.

Let me tell you of a recent experience.

When my son was 9, I took him down to see some spring training baseball in Phoenix, Arizona. This was our second trip down together and we hope to make it an annual tradition. We popped down just for three days to see three games.

The first game we saw was against the California Angels in their spring training facility in Tempe. There we sat waiting for the game to start. Now let me assure you, this was not an experience of the finer things in life. It was actually a little chilly out, though the sun was shining. We were sitting on relatively hard seats, and my cuisine consisted of peanuts and a diet-Pepsi. Hmmmmm.

But do you know what I found myself thinking? 'There is no place else in the world I would rather be right now.'

I was spending time with my boy, doing something we would both enjoy, and creating memories that will never go away. This, my friends, was one of the finest things in life.

What are the finest things of life in my book? Here are a few. You can



see where I am going and name a few yourself.

- ✓ Reading a novel just for the fun of it;
- ✓ A casual stroll along the beach with nowhere to go;
- ✓ An extra half-hour at the coffee shop, catching up with friends and actually tasting the great flavour of a cup of coffee, rather than rushing it;
- ✓ A game of crazy eights with my kids;
- ✓ A quiet evening out with my wife;
- ✓ A Saturday afternoon sleeping on the couch in front of the fire;

and the list goes on...

Are you taking enough time to stop and taste the finest things in life? Or are you so bent on getting to a point where you can experience the finer things in life?

I have a saying that 'good is the enemy of the best'. Sometimes the finer things of life get in the way of the finest things in life. Sometimes we settle for the finer things in life when we could be enjoying the finest things in life.

A credit card company produced a series of advertisements that went something like this (describing a vacation): Airline tickets: \$1500. Hotel room: \$1200. The smile on her face: Priceless.

We can always put a value on the finer things in life, and I would encourage you to enjoy them if you can. But the finest things in life are priceless. You can put no value or price tag on them. It is a mandate that we take the time to enjoy them.

Take some time this week to live up to the old saying: Stop and smell the roses. You will never regret it.

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The Most Important Thing You'll Do Today

Prioritisation List

Done	Task	Priority 1: Urgent	Priority 2: Important	Priority 1: Not Important
✓		✗		
			✗	
				✗

By Aub Warren

Like most busy professional people, you probably have too many things to do on most days. You probably work hard all day, but maybe you sometimes get home and wonder if you really achieved anything.

Tom Peters urges us: 'Stop doing all unimportant things now!' It's a challenging statement. Of course, sometimes everything seems important—then what? Then we just have to prioritise: put first things first, sort out the important from the urgent, identify the most important from the less important.

Easy to say, of course. Harder to do. Hard, but not impossible. In fact, it's indispensable if we're to be effective as individuals, professionals, parents, partners. So, here's the most important thing you'll do today: identify the most important thing you need to do—and then start work on it.

Too easy? Want to take it a step further? Stick to that most important thing until it's done—or at least until you really can't take it any further. Completed tasks are called achievements—achievers are those who complete the most important tasks.

Still too easy? Still want to go further? Help the people around you prioritise and pursue the most important things first. Help them see those things through to completion. Help them become achievers.

It will be the most important thing you'll do today.

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