



CHAPTER 17

The Very Best of Friends

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("Rafe")

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THE VERY BEST OF FRIENDS

One often hears that husbands and wives should be friends. It takes affirmative thinking, praying, planning and developing, for your friendship with your spouse to develop the way it should. As with so many of these facets of developing an outstanding marriage relationship, it calls for regularly making right **CHOICES** and then obediently carrying out those **CHOICES**.

Friendships don't just "happen." Friendships take time to develop. Friendships develop faster when both parties are deliberately seeking to develop the friendship. There must be a sharing of time. You need to do things together. You must **CHOOSE** to put your spouse into the position of your genuine, intimate, and BEST friend.

Some people believe that they will have a happy marriage even though their closest buddy is someone other than their spouse. I strongly disagree. Some people believe that they can have their most "fun" with someone other than their spouse. I suggest that to the extent that you operate under that belief, you are diminishing the opportunity to develop your marriage relationship and you are stunting your friendship with your spouse. The absence of being best friends can actually be at war with a happy and fulfilling marriage.

Let me get a little personal. My dear wife and I do have an outstanding relationship and part of our success is that we are the very best of friends. I suggest that the following realities of our marriage will also be true for other excellent marriages. There is no person in the world with whom I would rather spend time than my dear wife. There is no person in the world I would rather share an experience with than my precious Pamela. There is no person in the world whose counsel is more important to me than my sweet Pam's. There is no one in the world I would rather share goals, dreams and aspirations with than my darling Pam. If there is something fun to be done, I sure hope that my dear wife can do it with me.

Here again is an area for balance and common sense. NO person is going to do everything with his or her spouse. And there are fun things to do that will not include your spouse. And it is good for each spouse to have friends besides his or her spouse. However, I have encountered people who are out of balance the other way. What about the man who says that he needs to spend time with the boys? Or the woman who must spend time with the ladies? In an absolute sense, and by itself, that is not necessarily bad. The rub comes when either (1) you are going out with your buddies is to the exclusion or hurt your spouse, or (2) you are developing a closer friendship with any person other than your spouse.

Remember that God makes love a **CHOICE**. You have heard the expression that, "There is always time to do the things we really want to do." Time is very limited and no person has enough time to do all that he or she wants to do with everyone. Each person makes **CHOICES** about how to spend his/her time. For Christians who are sincere about developing an excellent marriage, there is absolutely no room for the wife to be a "hunting widow" or a "golf widow." Similarly there is no room for the husband to be wondering when he can spend some quality time with his wife who is always at this club or that club or spending much of her time with her lady friends.

It's Your CHOICE – The Very Best Of Friends

Here is an area where creativity can be used to accommodate legitimate friendships with others, while reaching your deliberate goal of keeping your spouse as your best friend. I was not a great basketball player, but before I lost my knees I enjoyed playing basketball. My precious wife has athletic abilities but she simply is not a basketball player. We organized a group of men to meet at the church gym on Monday and Thursday mornings at 5:30 a.m. for an hour of full court basketball. Early morning basketball did not conflict with other activities of my wife and family. Another area for creativity is to think of activities that can be done as a couple or with a group of people. This allows for wholesome development and enjoyment of friendships which do not exclude your spouse.

If a man or a woman resists these suggestions about friendships, then perhaps that person simply does not honestly desire to have the deep, intimate relationship with his or her spouse that can exist when a husband and wife are indeed **BEST FRIENDS**. Each morning both husband and wife should think about and pray about, “What can I do today that will draw me closer to my spouse and provide pleasant joint experiences which will enhance our friendship and help me to like and love my spouse even more?”

CHOOSE to make and keep your spouse as your very best friend.