



## CHAPTER 21

### Acknowledge and Depend on God and Do Not Take Yourself Too Seriously

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("Rafe")

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## **It's Your CHOICE – Acknowledge And Depend On God And Do Not Take Yourself Too Seriously**

### **ACKNOWLEDGE AND DEPEND ON GOD AND DO NOT TAKE YOURSELF TOO SERIOUSLY**

Don't take yourself too seriously. Don't allow your pride to be wounded if someone notes that you made a mistake or have a weakness? You and your spouse need to throw away the façade of total perfection, omniscience and omnipotence. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why I have enjoyed each year of Christian life more than the year before. I think that with more experience in life, and another year of knowing the Lord and growing in Him, I take myself less seriously and I have a greater freedom to be content and to laugh at myself. Isn't it a type of pride that says that it is O.K. for someone to laugh **with** me but I will be offended if someone laughs **at** me. If something is funny, it is funny, even if I am the one who has done something ridiculous, or embarrassing. Marriage should provide the freedom to laugh together without being offended.

Who created you? God (Genesis 1:26, 27). Who gave you your gifts and abilities? God (Exodus 31:1-5; Romans 12:6). Who sustains your life? God (Psalms 3:5; John 10:10; Psalms 121; Colossians 1:17). Who possesses all authority? God (Matthew 28:18). Who has provided every material possession, blessing, and income that you have? God (James 1:17; Philippians 4:19; Psalms 13:6; Matthew 6:8, 33; II Corinthians 9:8). Who controls the length of your life? God (Hebrews 9:27). Who know what today and tomorrow will bring? God (James 4:14; Psalms 147:5; Isaiah 40:28; 42:9; 46:10; Daniel 2:28; Matthew 24:36; Acts 3:18). Who is wise and the giver of wisdom? God (I Corinthians 1:24-25; Luke 21:15). Who is our shepherd, protector and shield? God (Psalm 23; Psalm 33:20; Psalm 121:7).

This list could go on and the answer would remain the same. **God** is all in all. You notice that none of the questions above can be answered with a "me" or a "you." The clear comparison between the great and infinite God, and things and people of the world, is set out in Isaiah 40:6-8; 12-28. God Himself instructs about our relative insignificance before our Maker using the inspired illustration of the potter and the clay. "Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker . . . Does the clay say to the potter 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'He has no hands?'" (Isaiah 45:9). "You turn things upside down as if the potter were thought to be like clay ! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'He did not make me'? Can the pot say to the potter, 'He knows nothing'?" (Isaiah 29:16).

Instead our proper response before God should be as found in Isaiah 64:8. "Yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand."

The sin of pride is a great barrier and hindrance to the development of an outstanding Christian marriage. The sin of selfishness is also a short circuit to the proper development of a happy and God-honoring marriage relationship. These two sins come in a host of varieties. Recognition of the total greatness, superiority, and wisdom of God and of our total insignificance apart from God, is a good start toward avoiding the sins of pride and selfishness, and helps us to not take ourselves too seriously.

When Jesus said "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me," (Matthew 28:18), that left exactly **zero** authority that belongs to either the husband or the wife apart from Christ.

## **It's Your CHOICE – Acknowledge And Depend On God And Do Not Take Yourself Too Seriously**

Jesus further stated that, “Apart from Me you can do **NOTHING**” (John 15:4). I calculate that “nothing” really means nothing (nil, zip, zero, nada).

**Therefore do not take yourself so seriously . . . lighten up . . . do not be defensive . . . be willing to laugh at yourself and to even allow others to laugh at you as well.**

I see recurring themes during the marriage counseling I do with Christian couples. I see husbands who distort and disobey God's biblical instruction by taking the position that they have some type of oppressive, dictatorial authority over their wife. Since all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Jesus Christ, that man is wrong to think that he has some independent authority apart from that which is delegated by the Lord. When I delegate authority to my staff I remain cognizant of how they use that authority and carry out my instructions. If a staff member should usurp authority, or fail to abide by my instructions, I simply am not going to favor that staff member with my continued blessing to exercise that authority, and I most certainly am not going to give that staff person who refused to follow my instructions any additional delegation of authority. God carefully (omnisciently) observes how we follow His instructions and use delegated authority.

I also see wives who are determined to climb over their husbands to be head of the house and to be a dictator of the house either through overt assumption of the throne or through calculated manipulation (whining, pouting, conniving, digging, etc.). I see one spouse making wholly selfish choices to the subordination of or the exclusion of the other spouse. I see people who believe that by putting down their spouse they will somehow elevate themselves. I see folks who are defensive about everything and who are willing to assume or attribute a wrong motive to their spouse. I see spouses engaged in various types of turf wars about property, jobs, relationships, and even their children.

In so many cases each spouse has dug in his/her heels and is willing to “work to fix the problem” only so long as it is the **other** spouse who does the changing, correcting, bending, etc. I hear them say that it is that **other** spouse who had done this, said that, failed to do this, refused to change that, and on and on and on.

So much of such contention and struggling for position can be avoided if you start with the proper understanding of how insignificant you are in comparison to the Lord. When you understand that God owns everything, then the quest for material things and the selfishness of hoarding them for yourself should not develop. When you really appreciate the fact that life is but a breath (Job 7:7, 16; 9:25; Psalm 39:5,11; 144:4; James 4:14), perhaps you can concentrate today on things that are really important. In this short life of ours it is urgent that we make the right **CHOICES** and take the actions necessary in order to obey and serve the Lord, bring glory to Him, and to build and really appreciate relationships – especially the relationship with your spouse.

Let me ask you this question. When a person is being defensive, is that person usually happy? The answer is no. Here's another question. Which person is happier in life – the one who is selfish and guarding his treasure, or the one who is more interested in serving others than in having things? A third question is, which person would you rather be around – the one who spits

## **It's Your CHOICE – Acknowledge And Depend On God And Do Not Take Yourself Too Seriously**

back when someone laughs at an embarrassing moment that is noticed, or the person who joins in the laughter and even finds levity in that embarrassing moment? We find each of these questions easy to answer. Why then is it so difficult for us to make the **CHOICE** to drop our wall of defensiveness or to come off of our high and prideful perch we have established in our efforts to insist that others consider us to be important, strong, flawless, etc.?

Allow your spouse the freedom to laugh with you and even at you. Be vulnerable, real, and open. Quit being selfish. If you are **CHOOSING** the life of a **giver** rather than a **getter** you are going to have a much easier time “lightening up” and not taking yourself so seriously, your spouse will certainly enjoy being with you ever so much more, you will enjoy yourself much more and you will have a much happier life.

God is so great. Isn't it wonderful that He invites us to follow Him and depend on Him. That's where security is and that's why we can relax in life. If we **CHOOSE** at the beginning to do it God's way we save all of the pain and trouble of beating our heads against brick walls and running into road blocks in the road. Simply accept God at face value when He says, “Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails” (Proverbs 19:21). Assuming that you have resolved that you are not going to attempt any longer to ascend to God's throne, or that somehow your ways are better than God's ways (Isaiah 55:8,9), then you can capture the reality that your hand is in God's hand and that He will ordain your steps (Psalm 37:23-24, 31; Proverbs 16:9).

Picture a little child who finds himself alone in the middle of an unknown woods as the sun is going down. He does not see the edge of the woods and has lost his bearings. He does not know which direction leads out to safety or what danger lurks along the trail or what villains or creatures may be hiding in the woods. As dusk turns to darkness every sound in the woods gives rise to terror. That lad can think all he wants that he is smart or strong or fast. The truth is, he does not know what lies ahead and he is incapable of proceeding safely.

Change that story just slightly. Add that the boy is holding the hand of his father who is a woodsman who works that woods and knows every square foot of the terrain. The lad feels the sturdy grip of his father's palm wrapped around his little hand. The boy is totally at peace. Indeed, he is free to enjoy the night sounds of the woods. Is that boy worried about not knowing the way out? No, because his father knows the way. Is that boy embarrassed because he is not strong enough to meet the dangers of the midnight woods? No, he doesn't need to even pretend that he can protect himself. It is quite sufficient that his father is with him, will not leave him, and will protect him. The boy is not afraid. The boy is free to be himself and to enjoy his father's presence. Because he is not trying to put on some false show and because he knows that his father is totally in control he really has the freedom to enjoy that moment of life. If he stumbles, his father will lift him up and he can even chuckle with his father as he brushes himself off. His father loves him. His father knows what lies ahead. And his father will protect and guide him.

So our heavenly Father, who is so great and wonderful, will protect and guide you (Read Proverbs 3:23, 26; Psalms 5:8; 7:10; 9:9-10; 16:8, 11; 17:8; 18:6, 28-30; 22:5, 24). When you have faith in the Lord and know who He is, you can trust Him. This leads to a right perspective

**It's Your CHOICE – Acknowledge And Depend On God And Do Not Take Yourself Too Seriously**

of your relative insignificance, which in turn allows you to be less prideful and selfish. Finally, all of this gives you the freedom to **CHOOSE** not to take yourself so seriously and to enjoy God's merciful and gracious blessings . . . including the matchless blessing of your God-given spouse.