

# Reality Living

## Healing for Marriages

Desperate marriages are plagued by four myths according to Dr Gary Chapman. Be honest, do you believe any of these myths?

- My environment determines my state of mind. – This belief renders one helpless and prompts feelings of hopelessness and leads to depression.
- People cannot change. - People can and do change and often the change is dramatic.
- In a desperate marriage, I have only two options – resigning myself to a life of misery or getting out. – This is simply not true. There are many actions you can take to change your situation and improve your circumstances.
- Some situations are hopeless and mine is one of these. – Situations may look hopeless, but that is a lie. As long as you have free choice, your situation is not hopeless.

The solution is Reality Living – rejecting the myths and taking the positive actions that stimulate constructive change in a relationship.

- **I am responsible for my own attitude.**
  - Attitude has to do with the way we choose to think about things, and it makes all the difference.
  - The electricity has been turned off because of failure to pay the bill.
    - This is horrible. We don't have any TV and we have nothing to do at night.
    - This is great, we are forced to talk together and go to bed early so we are better rested.
- **My attitude affects my actions.**
  - How we think about things affects our behavior and it is our behaviors that influence others and generate our results.
  - When we have a positive attitude, we look for opportunities to build people up, make things better, help out, etc.
  - Conversely, when we have a negative attitude we find ourselves tearing others down, being critical, feeling depressed, etc.
  - Whom do you prefer to have as a friend? What kind of friend or spouse are you?
- **I cannot change others, but I can influence others.**
  - Influence is not manipulation or forcing a spouse to change to your satisfaction.
  - Influence is creating the environment that promotes change because it is better for the spouse.
  - When one spouse CHOOSES a positive attitude and positive actions, it creates a tremendous opportunity for positive change.
- **My emotions do not control my action.**
  - This is a simple truth that we understand when dealing with others outside our family
    - We may be extremely mad at our boss, but we do not cuss him out or hit him.
    - We choose different actions because of the likely consequences.
    - Likewise, we can do this in all our relationships. To influence change, we need to and can choose positive actions even when our emotions are not positive.
  - Love is not a feeling; it is a commitment to your spouse in sickness and in health.

- Choose actions for positive change; do not allow negative actions to escalate.
- **Admitting my imperfections does not mean that I am a failure.**
  - Failures from self-centered living create barriers that can destroy a marriage.
  - Eliminating the barriers ultimately requires both to admit their imperfections and that they have failed each other; one can start the process.
  - While one is likely a bigger contributor than the other, neither one is perfect.
  - Acknowledging imperfections does NOT mean you are a failure; it means you are human.
  - Admit your failures and ask for forgiveness.
  - To admit failure, does not mean you accept total responsibility; it does mean you will no longer use your spouse's failures as excuses for your own.
  - You cannot tear down your spouse's wall. All you can do is tear down your own wall and influence your spouse to do likewise. This is a step in the right direction!
- **Love is the most powerful weapon for good in the world.**
  - Love is humanity's deepest emotional need.
  - In desperate marriages, spouses focus on receiving love rather than giving it.
  - Love is not an emotion; it is a commitment and attitude that is expressed by behaviors.
  - Thus, you can love your spouse even when you do not have warm emotional feelings.
  - Love is a choice and not a feeling. Paul's words:
    - Husbands – "Love your wives as Christ loved the church and **gave** himself up for her" [His free choice]. (Ephesians 5:25)
    - Wives – Paul exhorts older women to "train the younger women to love their husbands." (Titus 2:4). Love can be learned [trained] because it is not an emotion.
- When you choose to reach out with a loving attitude and actions toward your spouse, in spite of past failures, you create a climate where the two of you can resolve conflicts, confess wrongs, and build a stronger marriage.
  - A marriage can be reborn.
  - Reality living says I will choose the road of love because its potential is far greater than the road of myths, negativity and hate.

If your marriage is not all you had dreamed it would be, what impact do you think adopting the six principles of Reality Living would have on your marriage?

Will you give these principles a 60-day trial to see how they can work for you? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

If No, what barriers are stopping you? What do you have to lose?