

“YOU first.”



“No, I insist. YOU first!”

Marriage  
Tips  
Series

■ by Duane Kapp, MA, Marriage & Family Therapist, Chief Operating Officer

One of the great mysteries of life is the awareness that there is no human undertaking started with such tremendous hope and expectation - or that often leads to such disappointment - as love. Down through the ages, however, astute writers have shouted out the reason for such disappointment. It's because we want the other person to change *FIRST* and then we will change! That is, of course, backwards!

In order to change the ways my spouse loves me, I will have to change how I love my spouse *FIRST!* Of course that is a goal for both, not just one; both willing to change *FIRST!* The strength of a healthy marriage is to be willing to consider how I might improve my relationship and then go for it *FIRST!* This is the point of Jesus' command to concentrate on the log in your own eye and not the speck in the other person's eye. Even if he had said "speck" in each person's eye the point is still clear - Don't concentrate on changing the other person. Concentrate on your own personal change for the better and that will lead to the other person changing for the better as well.

Of course we all know individuals that appear to never change for the better! But often the flaw is in how we push each other for change. We need to show love as we push and that is done by *FIRST* seeing and then openly working on our own real flaws. Hint...it is what you and I did enthusiastically when dating and trying to get our new found love to like us even more!

"WE LOVE BECAUSE  
HE FIRST LOVED US."

1 JOHN 4:19 NIV

There is, therefore, always the question - Do I have the desire to learn what to change in me *FIRST?* If I prayerfully accept my part in being more loving, then the conscious Spirit of God can guide me down a new and healthier path. He may lead me to additional reading, to hearing a new clear teaching or a Christian professional therapist. It is our willing desire that God works with; our willingness to allow God to change me *FIRST*...if just a speck...so that my spouse cannot help but respond back in a more excellent way. That, of course, is why God loved us *FIRST*: he knows how we are made!



MARRIAGE TIP | Follow God's example: BE *FIRST!*

If we do not have the willingness to go *FIRST*, most likely there will never be enough books, sermons, marriage tips or counseling sessions available to get us to have a more healthy marriage. It will always be a standoff; each individual waiting for the other one to go *FIRST*. ■



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