

## **6- The Policy of Radical Honesty**

Honesty and Openness is one of the ten most important emotional needs identified in marriage, which means that when it's met, it can trigger the feeling of love. But it's counterpart, dishonesty, is one of the five most destructive Love Busters. When spouses are dishonest, they destroy the love they have for each other.

But there is a third reason that honesty is crucial in marriage. Honesty is the only way that you and your spouse will ever come to understand each other. Without honesty, the adjustments that are crucial to the creation of compatibility in your marriage cannot be made. Without honesty, your best efforts to resolve conflicts will be wasted because you will not understand each other well enough to find mutually acceptable solutions.

Most couples do the best they can to make each other happy, at least for a while. But their efforts, however sincere, are often misdirected. They aim at the wrong target. Ignorance, not lack of effort, is often the most important cause of their ultimate downfall.

Couples are not only ignorant of ways to improve their marriages; they are often ignorant of the problems themselves. To avoid conflict, they sometimes deliberately misinform each other as to their feelings, personal history, activities, and plans. This not only leads to a failure to meet an important emotional need, and a withdrawal of love units when the deception is discovered, it also makes marital conflicts impossible to resolve. After all, how can you and your spouse solve a problem if your cards are not on the table?

To help you understand how honest you need to be to have a successful marriage, I have written the Policy of Radical Honesty. I call it "radical" because that's how many see my position on the subject. But I view my policy as simply advocating complete honesty in marriage. In our culture I guess that's a radical idea.

### **The Policy of Radical Honesty**

**Reveal to your spouse as much  
information about yourself as you know;  
your thoughts, feelings, habits, likes,  
dislikes, personal history, daily activities,  
and plans for the future.**

To help explain this policy, I have broken it down into four parts:

1. **EMOTIONAL HONESTY:** Reveal your emotional reactions, both positive and negative, to the events of your life, particularly to your spouse's behavior.
2. **HISTORICAL HONESTY:** Reveal information about your personal history, particularly events that demonstrate personal weakness or failure.

3. **CURRENT HONESTY:** Reveal information about the events of your day. Provide your spouse with a calendar of your activities, with special emphasis on those that may affect your spouse.

4. **FUTURE HONESTY:** Reveal your thoughts and plans regarding future activities and objectives.

To some extent this policy seems like motherhood and apple pie. Who would argue that it's not a good idea to be honest? But in my years of experience as a marriage counselor, I have constantly struggled with the belief of many clients that dishonesty can be a good idea under certain conditions. Moreover, pastors and counselors themselves often advise dishonesty when a spouse has committed a particularly thoughtless act, such as infidelity. And many marital therapists warn against complaining, something that some consider one of the seven deadly sins of marriage. So instead of complaining, spouses often stuff their feelings and try to put a good face on a bad situation.

Granted, dishonesty can be a good short-term solution to marital conflict. It will probably get you off the hook for a few days or months or keep the problem on the back burner. But it's a terrible long-term solution. If you expect to live with each other for the next few years and still be in love, dishonesty can get you into a great deal of trouble.

Because there are so many out there who advocate dishonesty in marriage, I will describe the four parts of my Policy of Radical Honesty, and explain to you why I think they are so important in marriage.