# Three Enemies to Your Marriage: Part 3 – Dealing to the Enemy.

Blessings again. It's hard to believe that a quarter of the year has gone already. This email comes to you days before we celebrate Easter, and our prayer is this will be a time of fresh appreciation for you of ALL that Christ did for YOU on the Cross and through that Empty Tomb.

I'm sure you've heard the expression, "Marriage is Hard Work". I wish someone had told me that, or more importantly, had unpacked that for me before I got married. Like the couple I have referred to over the last couple of months, I too simply had No Idea!!! I think it only took us about a month or six weeks after our honeymoon to begin locking horns.

If someone asked me about my life back then, I would have said I thought I came from a very blessed background. My mum and dad were pastors. We had a good family life, and they grounded me well in the things of the Lord and church life. I also had a number of good jobs that helped in my post school education. I met my wife when I was 16 at a church Easter camp, and 5 years later we got married. But seriously, at 21, I really had No Idea!

In various ways, hidden under the surface, I had 'issues'. I had no appreciation of how insecure or self-centred I was, and I certainly had no idea of how our different backgrounds would impact on us. I came from a very structured family with a younger brother and sister, and a father that was an old school disciplinarian, whilst Veronica was the eldest of 8, which meant that there was little time for structure and order, while her father was a quiet, gentle, hard-working labourer.

As we've discussed in Parts 1 and 2 of this series, all of us come to Marriage with 'issues', and at some point they "are going to conspire to impact on our 'happily ever after' dream." Most of us had little awareness of the fact that, in preparing for Marriage, we were actually "carrying a culture, some attitudes and possibly a little unresolved baggage, that had the potential to derail" that dream.

So, let's not labour the point, we've done enough of that already. Let's Deal to the Enemy!

Let me pause here for a moment and speak again to those of you who at some point have seen the enemy at work in your relationship, looked at the 'issues', put in the hard work, and are now reaping the reward of what that 'Oneness' looks like. We salute you. Enjoy the fruit of your efforts. But can we ask too, that you take a moment to pray for the couples for whom this series of emails, has brought out in the open their challenges and struggles. Please pray that they will be able to use these emails to talk together and work out a path that will see them deal to the enemy once and for all.

For those of you who have been challenged, appreciate the prayer partners you now have, and let's get going and see if we can get these Enemies dealt to and sorted once and for all.

First off, some suggestions about how you proceed with this email. Hopefully you have taken the time to consider individually and collectively the content of Parts 1 and 2. As you read through what follows, take your time. Read it through, then go back to the start and go through section by section and share together your thoughts, *Feelings* and findings.

To start with, let's look at where your Marriage is at. Have you identified your 'issues'?

- You don't listen:
- You react when your spouse says or does something you don't like:
- You keep interrupting:
- You make decisions without discussing it first:
- You're not very domesticated:

- You're not very thoughtful:
- You get uncomfortable when things get heated:
- You have habits that irritate your spouse:
- You procrastinate and that makes your spouse annoyed:
- Devices or gaming take too much of your attention:
- You allow family or friends to demand too much of your time:
- You struggle with pressure:
- You are too disorganised or vice versa:
- You're too laid back:
- Your spouse struggles with your commitment to your work:
- You get irritable when tired or under stress.

You can probably even think of a few others that aren't on the list.

As you prepare to move on here's some things to keep in mind:

- Most of the time the 'issues' had their root, and quietly worked away under the surface quite unbeknown to you, back in your formative years, which gave "Principalities and Powers" the opportunity to go to work.
- Added to that, so often life just does not provide everyone with the skill-set needed to handle self-evaluation, be an effective communicator or be good at handling conflict when it arises.
- Then there's those terrible twins – Stubbornness and Pride. Oh, how many little 'issues' have escalated because of one or other – or in some cases – both of these terrible twins getting to work.
- With all of that, it's no wonder all too often we hear people say things like; "I had no idea". "When this started to rear its head, I just didn't know what to do". "When I saw myself behaving in this way I felt so embarrassed". "I don't like what I do, but I just don't know how to change".

Having identified that you have some 'issues', decide to take it in turn – guys first – to share what you have discovered, and follow the pattern we're suggesting below.

1. First off, *Take Ownership!* Don't allow the terrible twins to have their way any longer. In talking to people on these issues, I love to quote Pastor Jack Frost, when he says: "Take 100% responsibility for your part of the problem, whether your part is only 10% or 90% of the whole picture." Take full responsibility for you and your actions.
2. Second, *Be Objective!* Think about what specifically you are taking responsibility for. What from time to time have you done to bring tension or conflict to your relationship? Can you see a correlation between where you're currently at, and the baggage YOU brought with you into your Marriage? Do you react when stuff happens? Have you struggled with an inability to master the skills to handle tension and pressure?
3. Now, here comes the hard part. You need to make some time to sit down with your wife or husband and acknowledge to them that, having thought it through, you realise you have some 'issues'. Talk about the issues. Ask them what they see, and how it makes them feel. As they share *Listen,* and whatever you do don't interrupt. Guys, you take the initiative in this, then your wife; do the hard yards and remember our introduction, *"Marriage Is Hard Work"*.

4. Now, Ask for Their Forgiveness.Rather than make comment here about Forgiveness, go to the article on our Marriage Ministries page on the church web site and look at the contribution for April 2023 titled 'The Gift of Forgiveness'.

So, is that it then!!! Sadly, no it's not. These enemies have had their way in your system for so long, that a few shared words and meaningful sentiment are not going to see the axe put to the root quite so quickly or quite so easily. So, what's next? You've laid the foundation for you to move on, but there's no easy way to say this - the moving on is also *Hard Work.* I want to suggest three things that might help in moving on together:

First, a radical suggestion: introduce to your marriage, a Yellow Card!!! Having taken the time to process the stuff you have via this series of emails, and in doing so expressed the desire to put in the Hard Yards to change, now take some time to discuss the pros and cons of this idea. I'm sure most of you will know what a Yellow Card is in sport. But how does it apply to marriage. Here's how I suggest it might work for you. Whenever either one of you sees one of your spouse's 'issues' raring it's ugly head, you produce the Yellow Card. Just like the referee, you don't have to wave it around - just present it. If it has been shown to you, instead of reacting to your spouse's audacity, here's an opportunity for you to stop, remember *'Your spouse is not your enemy',* and use the moment to re-evaluate your actions in the context of wanting to change, and being prepared to put in the hard work. Take their action for what it is: you agreed to try it, and they are only using it because they, like you are committed to changing, but it takes the two of you to do so, and '*they are not your enemy'. You might even want to sit down together and evaluate what was happening in the lead up to the Yellow Card being introduced. What can you learn, how can you avoid this behaviour going forward. Here is the Hard Yards in action.*

Second, use the Marriage Ministries emails as a resource. On the LWCC website our previous articles are all there on our Marriage Ministries Department section, under the heading 'Articles'. Scroll through them together, and I'm sure you would find one or two of those articles that will give you some practical suggestions on a wide range of subjects.

Third, is it time you had some Coaching. Note, I didn't say counselling. Neither Ronnie or I, John or Karen are counsellors, but we have helped many couples over a good few years now, helping them identify issues and coaching them to apply practical ideas and tips to correct those 'issues'. If you had some difficulty sharing together, or getting on top of your particular 'issues', perhaps talking to someone may be the next and most helpful step. Or you could look at doing the Prepare/Enrich assessment, which will identify the strengths and the growth areas in your relationship. The follow-up coaching to the assessment gives you some really helpful material to then begin to work on those growth areas identified. We are so blessed to have three couples in our church who are registered Facilitators with Prepare/Enrich, so please reach out if you feel either of these suggestions might help you.

We trust this series has been more than a help; that it has been a huge blessing. Marriage is Hard Work, but there is an amazing reward for those who put aside the attitude of the age - if it doesn't, work trade it in for another model - apply themselves, and do the hard yards. The reward is 'getting' to a place of relationship, intimacy and oneness that was His original intent, and do you know anything He puts in place that doesn't have pretty awesome outcomes. The whole idea of starting a Marriage Ministry within LWCC was to encourage and inspire couples to keep reaching after just that.

nBlessings to you from the Marriage Ministries Team, Stan & Ronnie, John & Karen, Phil & Mel