

# How To Change Your Painful Marriage Or Family

## Intro.

Change is not bad if it stops pain and promotes healing. What's hurting in your life, your marriage, your family? I invite you to take a look at recurring patterns in your home. Maybe they are very old and comfortable patterns but they are not working any more and your relationships are filled with pain. Are you willing to change to a new family strategy? But willingness to change what? Listed below are three common family strategies that need to be challenged.

## I. Coded Communication.

A code is a secret way of speaking to other family members--often without the use of words. These can be unwritten rules learned long ago, that is, we don't talk about this issue or that issue. Perhaps a spouse's alcoholism or lack of intimacy. Sometimes coded communication involves a certain look between two spouses when someone brings up a forbidden topic. Or a threatening look of a parent to a child when the child's attempt to speak is beginning to feel challenging to a parent. Whatever has been in your "forbidden zone" in terms of communication may be excellent starting places for change. Get it out on the table--talk about it.

## II. Scapegoat.

Does one member of your family feel they are to blame for everything that goes wrong in your family system? If so that person may be the scapegoat. While it's very easy in American society to develop the victim mentality and fall into a pity party, it's also possible that one member of the family may be the scapegoat. Here's how to tell if your family has a scapegoat--if one partner or family member always refuses any blame for problems and consistently blames someone else you may have a scapegoat somewhere in your family. Be willing to change that. Start to take a good hard look at yourself and your contribution to problems in your family system. If you don't find any problems in your life you haven't looked long enough or deep enough. Be willing to take ownership. The goal of a hurting person is protection. The unconscious process goes like this: *I don't want to be hurt, therefore I don't want to take ownership because it hurts.* Because it hurts to admit my faults and sins to myself and others the carnal nature avoids ownership (pain) and nothing changes except the intensity of pain.

### Human Nature

1. The flesh says I am a victim.
2. The flesh says change others.
3. The flesh says avoid the issue.
4. I yield to the flesh and avoid change.
5. I feel frustrated and in more pain.
6. I remain immature.

### The Holy Spirit

1. In my pain I become accountable to the Holy Spirit.
2. The Spirit says I am a victor.
3. The Spirit says change me.
4. The Spirit says yield to God
5. I feel obedient and cleansed.
6. I become mature.

When in doubt as to what to change in your life begin to read the Bible.

II Tim. 3:16-17 "The whole bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives; it straightens us out and help us do what is right. It is God's way of making us well prepared at every point fully equipped to do good to

everyone.” (Living Bible)

### III. Family Strategies.

Like communication, family strategies can become rigid. This inflexibility causes couples and families to avoid seeking alternative ways of solving a problem. In other words these are our roles and they are firm and that is that. These are the rules and they are firm. These are the power distributions ( I have this authority and you that authority) and that is unchangeable. When family strategies become rigid the family limits their options and often feels hopeless when the old strategy fails.

#### Conclusion:

When family strategies and roles of communication lock up under stress pain will result. So remember that pain can be positive if you respond to it with a willingness to change.