

Goals: Are You and Your Spouse on the Same Page?

Objective:

Human relationships are ever changing. Are you and your wife growing closer or growing apart? One way for you to grow closer as a couple is to take time to share goals and dreams together. Goals take many forms, you might call them dreams, expectations, desires, ideals, vision, or values. Shared goals between spouses don't happen by accident, they take time to think about, and good communication! Couples that don't share some goals or a vision for their marriage are subject entirely to external influences, *regardless of whether those influences are desirable or not*. Good communication with your wife makes setting mutually agreed goals possible. Sharing goals as a couple ensures that together you have something to aim for. Common goals, shared values or a common vision can be "the glue" that binds you and your wife together through all of what life brings.

Suggested Song : We Are Many Parts (Blue 510, Red 727)

Bible & Catechism Readings:

Ephesians 5:25-31

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh

Philippians 3:12-16

It is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ. Brothers, I for my part do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus. Let us, then, who are "perfectly mature" adopt this attitude. And if you have a different attitude, this too God will reveal to you.

Only, with regard to what we have attained, continue on the same course.

Catechism 1605

Holy Scripture affirms that man and woman were created for one another: "It is not good that the man should be alone." The woman, "flesh of his flesh," his equal, his nearest in all things, is given to him by God as a "helpmate"; she thus represents God from whom comes our help. "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." The Lord himself shows that this signifies an unbreakable union of their two lives by recalling what the plan of the Creator had been "in the beginning": "So they are no longer two, but one flesh."

Saint: Saints Louis and Zelig Martin, (parents of St Therese of Lisieux). Speaking of their 2008 canonization, Rev. Romano Gambalunga, the postulator who followed the saint-making case through, said "It's the first time a couple have been canonized as a couple, and this is a beautiful sign for Christian families, who often are left without any support and have to go against the grain, especially in the West, to live and educate their children in the truth of creation and with that love that God has given us in Christ."

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/nation-world/ct-pope-married-couple-saints-20151018-story.html>

Vignette:

Kevin and Sheri have been married for 20 years and have raised three sons together; each boy is on the Autism spectrum. The couple has had to make a lot of difficult decisions as parents of kids with special needs. They don't always know exactly what to do in every situation, but they share an incredibly strong faith in the goodness and wisdom of God, and they agree that they are ultimately in God's loving care. Sheri and Kevin take time regularly to pray together and to talk about what's most important to them as a couple and as a family. This communication has helped the couple to enrich their relationship and to weather any storm that comes their way.

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

Are you goal oriented, or do you find it easier to go with the flow of what life brings to you?

In what circumstances do you find it easiest to talk about your dreams or goals with your wife?

What do you think your wife would say if asked for one of her marriage goals?

References:

1. Goal Setting Strategies – Goal for Marriages
http://www.goalsettingstrategies.com/goals_for_marriages.html
2. Goals In Marriage – Why Bother
<https://marriageisacommitment.wordpress.com/2013/02/09/goals-in-marriage-why-bother/>
3. Creating Dreams and Goals: Creating an Emotional Connection
<https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/cfs/cfs-747-w.pdf>
4. Relationship goals--Where to begin:
First, pick an area of your relationship that you'd like to work on. Here are some examples:
 - Communication goals: How can you become a better communicator? This might involve asking your wife more questions about her job, not interrupting your wife while she is speaking, or stating your needs more directly.
 - Compassion/support goals: This might involve asking your wife what she needs, driving her to a doctor's appointment, or setting aside a certain amount of time each day to check in with each other.
 - Affection/love goals: How often and how clearly do you express your emotions? Being affectionate can take on many different forms: directly with loving statements; through touch, such as hand-holding, or by establishing special gestures that only the two of you share. Establish goals to be more demonstrative means finding creative ways to express loving feelings on a regular basis.
 - Physical intimacy goals: Take steps to become a more attuned, responsive sexual partner. For instance, take the time to discover all the ways in which your wife would like to be sexually satisfied or come to an agreement with your wife regarding how often you'd both like to make love.
 - Shared interests/activities goals: The most successful married couples cite friendship as a key ingredient of their long-term success. Work toward developing activities that you both enjoy and

that you both enjoy sharing with one another. You might try a new activity together each month, such as taking tennis lessons or learning a new language.

- Household responsibility goals: How involved are you with completing household chores? Does it feel like the work is equally or fairly divided? The mundane details of daily life (things like cooking, shopping, cleaning) should be negotiated, not just assumed by default. Find out if your partner is happy with the current arrangement by asking if there is more that you can do.

This list is by no means exhaustive. Reflect on the areas of your relationship that you'd like to improve. Do some introspecting on your own and also think of feedback you may have received from your wife. For instance, if your partner has questioned your commitment by noting, "You never call when you say you're going to," you can develop a goal to show your commitment by becoming more reliable in following through on your promises.

Action Plan:

1. This week, talk with your wife about what's most important in life for each of you.
2. Set one goal that you, as a husband, can do to improve your marriage. Post it where you can see it every day.

Author: Vince Phelan (updated from Sean Mullarkey and Steve Frazer)