

## Martha and Phil: A Matter of Position

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What needs to happen in order for Martha and Phil to make it? As I wrote the article: "The Point", for PFL, News, I said that there was hope. Phil was distant but he was still halfheartedly trying. Martha was angry and nagging, but she still wanted him to be there for her. How can these people move another step toward the trust they need to make the "I need you"---"I will be there for you" position?

Phil needs to pay close attention to what he can and will do. (*He must honestly consider his position in other words.*) It is important that he does not allow himself to be manipulated to consider what he will and will not do. If he does not make the decision on his own, he will be angry and feel that he is a puppet.

Martha needs to be clear about what it is that she is lacking from Phil. (*Honestly, consider her needs and what it is she would like to specifically ask of Phil. She needs to inventory her position as well.*)

If Phil believes the marriage is worth his time and effort, he needs to consider what ways he can be there for her, and what ways he will not be able to be there for her. Does he just want to use what exists or does he want a real marriage?

Martha needs to consider whether or not she can venture forth to ask for what she needs from Phil knowing that he could leave her high and dry emotionally. But if she knows what she needs, asks for what she needs, and he turns her away, then she knows one way or another whether or not her concern about him is worth her time and effort. I am not suggesting divorce, I am suggesting dealing with what is and seeking God about fulfillment in other arenas (*not another man*)...there is danger here and if Phil is not wanting to invest or is not able to invest being there for his wife, Martha has to be careful about her grief over this loss. Martha's way of asking may have a real ring of anger and punishment to it.

Phil, if he is withholding on purpose, is going to have to answer to God, because it is sin. Is a football game more important than what your wife needs to say to you? Think about it long term. Are you creating respect or taking advantage of a routine wherein you generally get your way?

**BASIC PROMISES TO EACH OTHER AND CONTRACTS AROUND THESE PROMISES** - These promises and contracts are for both people in the marriage.

I will be vulnerable (humble) enough to know and to tell you that I need you.

When I don't trust you I will be honest about it and not punishing. I will attempt to tell you in terms that are not put downs, why I am having trouble trusting you.

If I tell you something, I will come through.

I will not play hit and run with your emotions or with on again off again games regarding our connection to each other.

I will be open to you as much as I am able to at agreed upon, appropriate times.

When I disagree with you I will be honest with you that I disagree and will not slam you with shame games or supposedly humorous, but really shaming, comments.

I will understand that you and I will see things very differently at times.

I will own up to the results of my actions and statements.

I promise to have compassion for you.

I acknowledge that we are equal before the Lord.

Phil and Martha desire to have their marriage work. This desire is key. Don't even bother with these things if the desire to actually work on your marriage is not there. Some people believe a marriage should just happen and that if one has to work, something is wrong with the other person.

If they believe the marriage is worth working for and will commit to work toward these positions, they will be building a stronger more intimate marriage, more satisfying for both. What I hear so often in marriages like Phil and Martha's is the desire to make the marriage work better, but not the goals or the skills. Often people need help to incorporate these things over time.

Once the underpinnings of a sense of "I need you"---"I will be there for you" gets established, occasional ignoring and nagging will be little barbs in the skin of the marriage not major slash and burns to the institution.

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