

Intro

My FG were discussing an interesting term the other day.

Minimalism

What does it mean?

It's actually originally a musical term coined around the 1920's

a style or technique (as in music, literature, or design) that is characterized by extreme sparseness and simplicity

Nowadays we also know it as a style of living where we try to get by on as little as possible.

To declutter our lives from everything except the bare essentials.

What that looks like in real life I have some small experience.

What I do know is that the less I have, the less burdened I feel.

(but the more I search for things when I have to fix something)

I found a great statement on minimalism.

MINIMALISM IS INTENTIONALITY

At its core,

minimalism is the intentional promotion of the things we most value and the removal of everything that distracts us from it.

You may not agree with that definition as it pertains to your practice of minimalism.

I like the definition if we overlay it with our lives as Christians.

It's the intentional promotion of our growing relationship with Christ.

As we continually remove everything that distracts us from it.

We have just introduced our fellowship to some babies.

And I thought, what better opportunity to look at two areas that these families are becoming more familiar with

Parenting and Marriage.

Now, not everyone is a parent and not everyone is married.

The principles that we are going to discuss however can just as easily be applied in every area of our lives.

1 - You are not God

Today I want to talk about an aspect of marriage that I have only lately started coming to terms with.

If there is one thing that I have to keep learning in all my relationships.

Especially the one with my wife.

It's, "I am not God".

That may look and sound obvious.

Clearly.

However

There are times ... when I can come across as God.

You see, He **is** always right in everything he does.

Let's take a tiny slice out of the relationship pie and let's see how God handles it

Pro 8v8

⁸ *All the words of my mouth are just;
none of them is crooked or perverse.*

This does not describe me.

(Mathematical proof - God = Always right, Marc NOT= Always right, therefore Marc NOT= God)

They describe God and God alone.

However

There are times when I think this way

That all my words are just.

I have an inherent built in desire TO BE RIGHT.

That desire, TO BE RIGHT, implies that all my words are always **just**.

That none of my words are ever **crooked or perverse**

What are the chances of that happening?

But it gets worse.

Then, if that isn't enough. I can bring in an accelerator.

Do you know what that is?

It's like you're making a braai and either it isn't going so well or you're in a hurry.

So what do you as a red blooded SA male do,

you find something that will **Accelerate the process**, like ... petrol.

Emotions in an interaction with somebody, is like adding petrol to the discussion.

There we were, talking about whether or not we needed a new and bigger TV set and then she said ...

Suddenly the discussion road you were on hits a dead end.

Luckily, there is another path but this sheers off quite sharply to the left, the road gets rocky and a thick mist descends.

The thread of what I would have said on the good road going forward before I got emotional, ended and a new thread started of what I actually said after I got emotional.

What did I found out with hindsight?

Emotions made my words more crooked and more perverse.

Am I saying all emotions are bad?

No, I'm saying be careful

Especially when that emotion is anger, because someone questioned your rightness on a matter.

So Mr Husband (I'm talking to myself), it actually applies to all of you.

If I have an inbuilt desire **to be right**

But, only God is **always right**

Therefore, if I am honest with myself, I have to come to that most humbling of opinions, "I may be wrong".

This however now leads to the next level of self examination.

If I have just proven to myself that I may be wrong, it makes sense to then enter every conversation with that mindset.

This is called growth.

And all marriages can be divided into these seasons of growth.

Season one - when I know I'm right.

Season two - When I start getting an inkling that this path is not working that well for me and start some self examination

Concerning this need to be right that I feel inside me.

Season three - When I come to the conviction that BEING RIGHT is wildly overrated

Because the hidden implication is that YOU ARE WRONG

And ultimately our relationship is more important than my RIGHTNESS

and it's way more important to be humble than to be right.

That season we keep working on till the end.

So, once I get past Season one, I start having mindset that whatever I am thinking right now may not be 100% correct.

Now I'm starting to understand what this Scripture could mean.

Eph 4v29

*Do not let **any** unwholesome talk come out of your mouths,
but **only** what is helpful for building others up according to their needs,
that it may **benefit** those who listen*

Now what happens is that I start saying things more carefully.

Instead of, "This is the way to do it", I could say, "this is one way to do it".

Instead of, "Let's go here", I could add, "what do you think".

When I say, "Let's buy this car because it has a 1.6l, turbo engine and does 0-100 in 5sec", I add, "do you like the colour", because that is what is important to her.

We all bring strengths and weaknesses into our relationships and marriage is a great testbed of these differences.

I bring a sense of entrepreneurship with its associated financial risk taking

She brings in caution and "explain to me exactly what you're thinking" kind of questions.

If I read the Scripture correctly

"*Any unwholesome talk*"

"*Only what is helpful*"

"*That it may benefit those who listen*"

Imagine I reduced my need TO BE RIGHT to the point where I get pleasure when others are right.

I want them to be right, because that will build them up

Mind blowing stuff that we need to wrestle with, especially in our marriages.

2 - You are 'God'

My parenting thought.

Please don't get me wrong, I'm not making a blasphemous statement, elevating ourselves to God's level.

It's a matter of perspective

When your child is a few months old and completely dependent on you for everything,

Then YOU pretty much determine everything that happens.

When it gets fed

When it drinks

When it sleeps

What it wears

And so on

From the child's perspective you are as godly as it gets.
you represent and influence their whole world.
That's a scary thought.
It's fine when they are babies but at some point they are going to grow old enough to start remembering.
Remembering what.
How you treat them
How you made them feel
How you do things
What things you consider important or not
What people you surround yourself with
How you treat their mother
And how she treats you.
ALL these things represent what 'God' would do, from the perspective of their own lives.
They have no other reference.

I still see it happening every day
(Examples from Leale - Mommy is beautiful, Love you to the moon and back)

How does that thought make you feel?

Paul, in the NT can get quite specific as he teaches us about Christian life.
In 1 Cor 10 he has just
Given some instructions on meat sacrificed to idols,
Before that some insight into the Lord's supper
Before that some warnings from Israel's history.
But then he lays down a one liner with eternal significance.

1 Cor 11v1

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

Does that not look like a charge also made to parents
In the light of what we were discussing earlier
"Follow my example" he says.
Well what specifically we may ask.
There is nothing specific, it's not a statement on specifics in case we want to say, "that does not apply to me"
Everything he does
His example,
the way he does life,
The way he thinks about matters that come to his attention
The way he talks to people
The way he treats people.
His life.

That's what our kids do when they are younger, automatically, they follow how **we** do life.
What did my kids follow?
We became disciples when my children were 7 and 9 years old.
It goes without saying that in the BC days I followed what I thought was right, fun, exciting, certainly not God.
I led my family into situations that would make your hair curl. (and those with curly hair ...)
I make it funny but it was not funny, Joan and I did not have a clue about parenting or the holiness of marriage.

Then in 1993 we suddenly had a church full of examples.
The righteousness of my new peer group made me giddy.
And we started following their example.
As new borns or born agains, babies in Christ, dependent on a church full of parents to guide us in everything.

Then we grew older as disciples
And that's when the second part of that Scripture started growing in influence.
"The example of Christ".

It had always been there but just getting on board with what my peers were up to was overwhelming enough.

And so our children get older
And we start sharing with them that the example they were following was their parents.
However their parents are following the example of Christ.

How He made us feel.

How He treated us

What He had done for us.

How we should treat each others

What things are important or not important

What things to gather around and what things to let go

As we intentionally promote the things we most value and remove everything that distracts us from it.

And so our children look at us

And what we most value is clear because it's what we spend most of our energy on.

And what we don't value is also clear because we remove it from our lives to make room for what we value.

And as a Christian, what we most value can only be Christ

As we remove those distractions from our lives that prevent us from doing that.

Summary for Parents and Marrieds