



## The Family Room

By Dr. Roy Don Whitehead

### Be Nice to Each Other

What advice would you give to a young married couple who is just beginning a life together? Occasionally I am asked for advice in such a situation. Here is my answer.

"The most important advice I can give to you as newly married couple is very simple. In fact it borders on the simplistic, but it is true. What is the most important thing you can do to make your marriage successful? Be nice to each other. That's it - be nice to each other. It is not complicated nor hard to remember, but it can be very difficult to do."

It is sad that sometimes we treat strangers better than we treat our mates.

John (not a real person) is a respected businessman in his city. He deals with difficult people all day and never loses his cool. When he comes home, however, he is a different person. He screams at his wife and tells his kids to "get lost."

We are nice to others but not to each other. We scream at each other when we would never do that to strangers. We say cutting things to each other when we would never do that to strangers.

Mary (not a real person) has been married to Joe for twenty years. She wishes that she had married somebody with more ambition and more money, and she is not hesitant about telling Joe how she feels. He dreams coming home to another lecture on his lack of ambition.

Is Mary like this with other people? Of course not. She is pleasant to her fellow church members and to the others in her club. While she does occasionally become upset with the children and say hurtful things to them, no one outside her family would believe she was anything other than the perfect wife and mother.

We need to be nice to each other - even when we are angry. It is possible to be angry without being hurtful to the other. We can be loving and caring even when we are angry.

Mike and Linda (not real people) have learned how to do this. When one of them is upset, he says, "I have a gripe." The other says, "OK, what is it?"

He shares his gripe in a calm voice without being accusing. The other repeats what he has said, and then asks if this is what he means. When he is certain she has gotten the point, he says, "That's it."

Often the communication of gripe is all that is necessary to resolve it. Sometimes one spouse or another must take some action to make the

gripe go away. Whatever the case, speaking of a gripe "with love" has a much better effect than screaming abusive words.

Many things are important in building a marriage. Communication and commitment are crucial. We must be able to talk to each other, and we must be totally committed to the marriage to make it work.

As a counselor, register and old married man, however, I am convinced that the most important principle that can make a marriage successful is "be nice to each other." Be as nice to each other as you would be to a total stranger.

Dr. Whitehead is a pastoral counselor with an office in Somerset. He has been helping individuals, couples and families to solve the problems of everyday living for seventeen years. He works with depression, anxiety, abuse and marital problems. You may contact him at 1-877-PASTOR-8 or 679-4134.

## Yards to Paradise

By: Max Phelps

### Landscaping for Seasonal Decorations

As your neighbors flock to crowded stores or sales yards for greenery and decorations, why not use items from your own landscape? There are so many plants that bear lovely berries or colorful foliage. You probably have some of them in your yard. Or you may want to plant at this time for future decorations.

Berry decorations could come from hollies and winterberries (leafless hollies), beautyberries, nandina domestica, pyracantha, bayberry, wax myrtle, sea buckthorn (seaberries), sumac, Indian hawthorn or bittersweet.

Cones and seedheads could come from pines and Deciduous cedars, magnolias, lotus flowers, perhaps wildflowers.

Evergreen boughs can be harvested from so many of the pines, cedars, junipers, spruce, etc. Hemlock boughs with small cones attached are especially cute. The branches of Balsam and Fraser firs perhaps have the best aroma of all. Ivy, honeysuckle, red-tip photinia, laurel branches and some of the eu-

onymus species may not be traditional, but are attractively used as indoor decorations. (Let's not forget a few sprigs of mistletoe!)

Various grasses are wonderful for winter bouquets. Combined with a few bare branches, maybe red-colored dogwood or blueberry twigs, wildflower seedheads such as tassel and goldenrod may be used attractively. Fern fronds are also used indoors in some lovely arrangements.

Vines can be used in many ways. The traditional grapevine wreath, with greenery or fruit or seeds woven carefully into it is a perfect example of using landscape items from the yard or forest in seasonal decorating themes.

We often landscape to attract birds, bees, butterflies and so forth. Or to screen certain areas. Or to put a specimen prominently in the yard. This year consider some plantings in your yard which would be attractive anytime, but especially useful for branches and berries to decorate the inside of your home.

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