



Shepherd Care®

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To Care for People Where They Live and Work

COMMUNITY Care TOPIC

In-Laws and Out-Laws

You can pick your spouse, but you cannot pick your in-laws! Unfortunately, when a couple is getting married, the vows “for better or for worse” can describe the family relationships. Family matters are the most serious matters and can bring the most support or cause the most destruction. By implementing these practical steps, you can improve upon this relationship.

How Can the Couple Improve the In-Law Relationship?

- Prepare- if you are not yet married, then make sure that you and your fiancé talk about the relationship with your family (parents and siblings). If you are already married, it is never too late to talk to each other about how to improve upon the in-law relationship. Share your heart, hopes, fears, and expectations.
- Understanding- Acceptance of differences of opinions and styles is necessary. These can include food, clothing, and even parenting.
- Cleave- You are marrying or married to your wife or husband, NOT the parents! A sure way to undermine your spouse is to continually take the side of your mother or father without listening and truly relying on your spouse.

What If YOU are the In-Law?

- Respect- Respect your son or daughter enough to allow them to become their own family unit. Honor boundaries.
- Accept- Accept that there will be differences of opinion and style. If you see the couple about to make a tragic mistake, well then that is important enough to insert your opinions (tactfully and with respect). However, if you are upset about the color of your daughter-in-law’s drapes or wall paper then you should probably keep quiet and zip your lip. After all, it is their house and their life.
- Understanding- If you seek to understand, rather than be understood, when you do speak, you will be more inclined to be received. It may take years to form a deep and abiding trust, but it is worth it to persevere to make this happen. Share your heart with the couple about your hopes and expectations as an in-law.
- Support- Be there for them, especially when *they* need you.

If bad habits have already developed (on both sides), it may take some readjusting. This process can be painful and take time, but it is worth it. A neutral event is a good way to help make restoration happen. Families are made up of imperfect people, but we all need family. It is up to each of us to make our families the best they can be!

Introducing your Community Chaplain

Eric Kieselbach
(pronounced “key-sill-baa”)

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“For the first time ever, I was taking the family on the road. We stayed with my in-laws, which on life’s list of experiences ranks right below sitting in a tub full of scissors.”

Jeff Foxworthy

“But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so, then they are no more twain, but one flesh.”

Mark 10:6-8

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