

Emotional Walls

By Kathleen Rivest, PhD

Brick by angry brick the couple builds walls between them. Each row of brick, created by unresolved conflict, is held together by mortar made of bitterness, hateful thoughts, anger, resentment, unforgiveness, unrepentance and more. What was once a hope-filled, loving relationship becomes a war between frustrated, battle-weary people. The couple that once looked at each other with hope, tenderness and joy now can barely see each other over the top of their respective brick piles.

After a time it doesn't really matter what the issues are, since all conversations end in a fight. This is Satan's playground and the couple's shame. The man and woman who stood at the altar and promised, before God, friends and family, to stay together in good times and in bad times, are now threatening to divorce each other. The ability to protect each other's fragility is dead. The one individual who used to understand even unspoken needs now refuses to listen. Too much effort is spent in trying to be heard, too little in trying to empathize.

These are the "bad times" they promised to stay together through. These are the times they thought they would skate past, even knowing that such times exist in other marriages.

Demolishing this wall takes time and effort. Probably before all the issues can be resolved, daily actions of kindness will be required to start chipping away at the mortar holding the bricks in place. Each will have to develop the fruits of the Spirit if they hope to have God's help in restoring the trust. Patience, self-control, gentleness, hope and thoughtfulness will help the mortar to be removed and the bricks to loosen. Repentance, forgiveness and prayer for one another place the hurting people in God's healing presence, allowing Him to mature the marriage – and the people in it.

There is hope for this couple. With humility, honesty and the resolve to rebuild, love can again bloom. The walls can be transformed into walkways. However, this blessing will only come when there is permanent change created by new agreements replacing old disagreements. These new agreements, carefully and lovingly made, will help this couple to once again feel the content that comes with unity. The disagreeable bricks will come down, piece by piece, row by row from between them, while a new wall, one which encloses their intimate union and keeps intruders outside, is formed.