

Lasting Marriage

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Some are convinced that marriage is becoming obsolete because they look around and see the failures of their friends and family. We need to be careful, though, to take a long, hard look at God's design for marriage before giving up on it. Compare the Biblical model to those of your friends and family and the differences may be startling. Why is marriage in our country failing? For no other reason than it has strayed far from an ideal. When I look at marriage in the Bible, I find:

- The man giving happiness to his wife (Deuteronomy 24:5);
- The man living joyfully with her all the days of his life (Ecclesiastes 9:9);
- The man intoxicated with his wife (Proverbs 5:19);
- The man rejoicing in the relationship (Proverbs 5:18);
- A willingness to sacrifice for his wife (Ephesians 5:25);
- Nourishing and cherishing her (Ephesians 5:29);
- The man becomes an expert on his wife (1 Peter 3:7);
- The woman supports her husband (Genesis 2:18);
- She does good for him all his life (Proverbs 31:12);
- She respects him (Ephesians 5:33);
- She teaches younger generations the value of love (Titus 2:3-4);
- The husband and wife are so close they are "one flesh" (Ephesians 5:31).

"When I look at the above description of marriage how could such a beautiful institution become obsolete, especially considering the most basic need in every person is to be genuinely loved. Secondly, how could a marriage that practices the above principles ever fail? Simply put, how could two people who are sacrificing for each other, reveling in their mutual love, supporting, communicating, honoring, nurturing, and nourishing each other ever want out of such a relationship?" ("A Great Marriage", Mark Dunagan, www.beavertonchurchofchrist.net).

How Can I Make My Marriage Last?

Divorce Yourself First – You can never really be happy in a marriage until you get a divorce from yourself, giving up your "me time", the video game obsession, or insisting that you should not have to do household chores. More often than not, the most common "love interest" that undermines a marriage is not necessarily another person, but rather, one partner being in love with self. Rather than confronting our own faults, or making meaningful, sacrificial changes, we seek a separation from our spouse.

Treat Each Other Like Company – *"And grant her honor"* (1 Peter 3:7). Too many marriages have died because people had the unbiblical idea that once they were married, they could say or do anything they wanted, and their partner could do nothing about it. It is the old "you're stuck with me now" mentality. But when you honor somebody, you never take him or her for granted. The term "honor" means to value. Somebody once told me to always treat my wife like she was an honored guest (not in any impersonal sense of the word, obviously); like she is a queen, a dignitary, a cherished friend.

Treat Each Other Like Christians – “As a fellow heir of the grace of life” (1 Peter 3:7). Many marriages fail because people were never taught the final goal of the relationship, which is to make it to heaven together. Obviously, if the final goal is to build wealth, own a home together, have a convenient lover, or have successful children, then should it surprise us when our marriages succeed or fail in conjunction with these things? Superficial things, destined for eventual failure themselves (Matthew 6:19-21), cannot keep a marriage together.

Stop Listening To Culture – If all we listen to is our culture’s misconception about marriage, we may get off on the wrong foot. Love songs today say less about true, biblical love and more about lustful, fleeting romance. Movies incessantly portray married life as boring, unexciting, and unfulfilling. Oddly enough, many of our literature’s “heroes” are nothing more than adulterers and fornicators. Every sitcom makes marriage seem mundane and frustrating, with husbands constantly seeking escape from the drudgery of their lives, and wives desperately longing for creative outlets. What is very liberating, though, is to think of love not as an uncontrollable, erratic emotion, but a conscious choice. We do not have to fall in and out of love when we view it as an action, rather than a feeling. The wise Christian realizes that marriage is not about fulfilling “self”, but sacrificing for the “other”. Both the husband and the wife are literally commanded to love one another (Ephesians 5:25, Titus 2:4), which tells me that I am capable of love even when I do not “feel” like it.