
One Secret of a Happy Marriage

Radio Message by Dwight Porter, D.D.

Despite all of the books, videos, and cassettes in our Christian bookstores, Christian marriages continue to fall apart. With my own ears I heard a Christian psychologist, with the largest radio audience, state that the percentage of wrecked homes in the world is identical to that within the church. God's statement in I Corinthians 7 is ignored. If we allow separation, it will be the first step in disobedience. Can I get a divorce? You are not to be separated as husband and wife, except for a temporary time, which is coupled with warning. Read it! The Bible is very clear about the husband and wife relationship!

There are few happy marriages in the day which you and I live. Why? That is easily understood. One condition ruins this thrilling relationship. It is **SELFISHNESS!** If a person disobeys God in his personal attitude and lifestyle, how can he or she expect God's blessing upon their union?

Before I talk about adjustment in marriage, let's consider a modern-day misconception about this God-provided union. It is the most wonderful, thrilling, intimate relationship outside of being sons of God. Today's philosophy says that love doesn't need a piece of paper. Marriage to many means the possibility of getting stuck in an unhappy relationship. Remember, for many, marriage is our last best change to grow into a fulfilled, mature person. Submission to God's leadership is a proper step toward adjustment to each other. A built-in failure results from an immature concept of this relationship. If a wife believes the home revolves around herself and the princess syndrome is to continue through married life, a poor relationship will be of her own making. If each endeavors to usurp authority over the other, they deserve the ensuing war.

Marriage is not a guarantee of happiness. If so, marry your house, car, or TV set. Looking for a man or woman who will treat you perfectly? God help you if he or she has been found according to your evaluation. Is your love based upon your feeling, produced by your spouse? If so, your love will fluctuate with treatment, circumstances, or reactions. Love is a commitment on your part to provide all of the needs for the object of your affections.

Directions Are Clear

Scriptural directives are loud and clear for every spouse. Are you listening? Are you still reading? Here are some of them:

1. Each spouse is to submit himself or herself to one another. "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:21).
2. The wife is to submit to her husband as the final authority in every contested issue. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord" (v.22)

3. The husband is to lead in spiritual worship at home and is to have loving authority over his wife and children. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the savior of the body" (v. 23).
4. He is to love his wife, following the demonstration of Christ's love for His bride, the Church. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (v.25).
5. Children are to obey their parents. The responsibility for this obedience belongs to the parents as much as the children. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1).
6. Honor is given to parents by their children. This is deserved and merited by parents. "Honor thy father and thy mother; which is the first commandment with promise" (v. 2).
7. Parents are not to generate anger within their children (negative). They are to demonstrate, under the authority of the Lord, by their demonstration before them (positive). "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (v. 4).
8. As parents, the husband is to give definite honor and respect to his wife as one with a weaker body than his. If this is not practiced, his prayers will not be answered because of this disobedience. "In like manner, ye husbands dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered" (I Peter 3:7). The greatest verse for married couples is found in Ephesians 4:31,32. Read it carefully. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." Don't miss Colossians 3:13-15. "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful."

But I can never forgive him. Since when is adultery unforgivable? If God forgives, and commands the same of you, then how can you expect His forgiveness if you fail to exercise the same? "Therefore, I say unto you, whatever things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have anything against any, that your Father also, who is in heaven, may forgive you your trespasses" (Mark 11:24,25).

One Secret

Now I have arrived at my subject matter. The secret of a happy marriage is **ADJUSTING** to one another. Few work at this because of preconceived notions about marriage. The wedding is over; and with the princess syndrome, the wife expects a life of continuing moonlight and roses. Nine chances out of ten, the **One**

husband will act and react like his father Why be-surprised? You mean you hadn't noticed prior to your trip down the aisle? Husband, are you going to be surprised at your wife's mental attitude after observing her mother prior to her daughter's marriage relationship with you? The big adjustment begins right

after marriage. Two individuals walking down different roads, with parents completely different, come together for a lifetime. Not too many young couples are ready for such a change of life. It is a big one! They had better possess real love. Do you know what that is? (You should write for my free printed message, *Am I in Love?*)

Here are some of the great adjustments in marriage. Are you going to get through them with ease or make them insurmountable mountains? Will you adjust to your spouse—the one that you cannot and will not make over anyway? Will you keep your attention on yourself and develop an attitude of sorrow and sympathy for the most important person in your life—YOU?

Advice and Counsel

1. When you get married, all of a sudden you are living together. Any other sexual relationship, independent of marriage, is fornication (if not married before) or adultery. God says NO and assures both of an entrance into Hell. (Galatians 5: 19-21)
2. The husband, realizing his financial responsibility, works hard to get established in his career. Many a wife concludes that his work is more important than she is. How sad! Here is another crisis.
3. When the first child arrives, the mother must take attention from her husband for the new member of the family. This is a big adjustment for the husband, especially if the wife becomes neurotic about the welfare of the child. To allow a child to come between a husband and wife is the height of folly. God gives us children when He desires us to have them. "Lo, children are an heritage from the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of one's youth. Happy is the man who hath his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate" (Psalms 127:3-5).
4. Don't minimize the in-law problem. You have married your spouse's family. Adjust to their idiosyncrasies. They have been living in a different world. If they bother you, it is your fault. No one is to cause you trouble. "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1).
5. Age takes its toll and demands tremendous adjustment. A husband in front of his wife in my office stated, "She is not the woman I married." I proceeded to tell him, how could she be the same after presenting him three children. Living with him for all these years could change anybody. Husband, is your inference that you have not changed?

6. Age takes its toll in varied ways. Here is one of the greatest challenges in your marriage! Are you awake to the attitudes developing within your spouse? Better not wait very long before you recognize them. In older age your concrete attitudes set up faster and harder. Are you still ministering to one another? A wide-open sharing of concerns is of great assistance during this time of adjustment.
7. At least once a month sit down together and discuss exactly how your marriage relationship is progressing. List your encouraging signs and those that give you a bit of concern. Ask your partner how you are doing, especially notice your partner's suggestions for improvement. Better have some smelling salts in your purse. By the way, the timing of these sessions is very important. Perhaps it could be during a date, the time you get away for a few days, or after a nice cozy trip to the restaurant, but by all means, do it regularly.

Some Do's

1. Realize that your most important relationship upon this earth (next to the Lord) is with your spouse.
2. Remember that in your marriage relationship you have the best and most effective demonstration before your children as to happiness, responsibility, and confidence. Why not assure your children at an early age that their mother and father will never separate until one goes to Heaven. Your children will soon be playing and going to school with a child who is not living with his or her father.
3. By your talk, appearance, and display of affection, prove to your spouse that of having made the right choice when he or she looks around.
4. The most important person in your household is your spouse! Be sure your entire pattern of activity revolves around him or her.

Some Don'ts

1. Don't think complaining and nagging is going to provide what love will produce.
2. Don't feel sorry for yourself in your spouse's action or reaction. Keep busy meeting his or her needs. The returns will be great.
3. Stop reading fictional books, looking at soap operas, and dramatic TV series about love. They know nothing about it, since the only love in the world comes from God which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).
4. Don't ever stop assuming personal responsibility for present relationships in your marriage. YOU are the first person to allow God to change. If he can change your heart, attitude, and actions, He can do the same for your spouse.

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