

Marriage Q&A

Q: How can we improve our sex life?

A: Guard your marital intimacy:

1. Guard yourselves against erotic stimulation that is not of your spouse:
 - Minimize time spent watching sexually appealing media (TV, movies, magazines, pictures)
 - Avoid extended glances at attractive persons
 - Never compare your spouse's appearance to that of another person

Be content with what is yours and "rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe" (Proverbs 5:18-19).

2. Guard yourselves against emotional intimacy with people of the opposite sex:
 - Minimize opposite sex friendships and casual conversation
 - Never be alone with the opposite sex
3. Guard yourselves against a build-up of biological urges. Practice regular intimacy and "Do not deprive one another" (1 Corinthians 7:5).
4. Guard yourselves against stagnation. Make sure you're always growing, getting outside your comfort zone, and becoming newly excited about what God's doing with you. Constantly be improving your body, mind, and spirit. Then you will have excitement to share with your spouse.
5. Guard yourselves against perversion.
6. Guard yourselves against selfishness. In your intimacy practice the love of Christ, who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Ask how you might best give yourself to your covenant partner. Ask what hairstyle or clothing he/she likes for you. "For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does" (1 Corinthians 7:4).

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Q: Where can we turn for help with our problems?

A: God, the Bible, and your local church pastor.

Ask your pastor for Biblical counseling. Avoid psychological counseling because it will not take a moral stance and will only facilitate the self-worship that is likely at the root of your conflict (see pamphlet, *The Spiritual Truth About Psychological Counseling*).

The answers to all marital problems can be found in the Bible:

Proper behavior for a husband: self-sacrifice and understanding – Ephesians 5:25-29; 1 Peter 3:7

Proper behavior for a wife: inward adornment of gentleness and a quiet spirit – Proverbs 31, Ephesians 5:22-24, 1 Peter 3:1-6

Gentleness, patience, peace – Galatians 5:22-23

Humility – Philippians 2:1-11

Sexual faithfulness – Proverbs 5:15-20

Commitment – Genesis 2:24; Matthew 5:32, 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:10-12

Forgiveness – Matthew 6:12, 18:21-35; Luke 6:27-28

Are you Christ-like enough to make your marriage right?

The Spiritual Truth About Marriage



Choosing the right mate

The secret to marital happiness

*What the Bible says about
marriage and divorce*

What to do when problems occur

Marriage – A Very Big Deal

Marriage is understandably a huge issue for most people. No one wants to spend every day of the rest of their life with someone with whom they're not happy. Choosing a mate can be a big task. Keeping one can seem like a mountainous task. But even mountains are no match for faith as small as a mustard seed (Matthew 17:20). If you are committed to God, then you are committed to choosing the right mate and working to preserve and improve your marriage. Within the Bible can be found the instructions for all of these.

Marriage is also a big deal because it brings out the worst in us. Despite the fact that we succeed at concealing our true selves from most people, we tend to consistently and powerfully hurt the ones we love. Welcome to your sin nature rearing its ugly head. Can we talk? Marriage is a spiritual issue, a supernatural union of a man and woman into one flesh (Genesis 2:24), so the success or failure of your marriage depends on your spirituality. Stop seeking for answers in the world! The secret to a happy marriage is not learning to communicate better. It is not learning each other's "love languages." It is not learning conflict resolution strategies. In fact, it is not a process of learning at all but one of *becoming* more like Christ.

From the Author

Eleven years ago God gave me Laura, a "helper fit" (Genesis 2:18) for me, a gift far more precious than I often realize. We are no stranger to conflict, but the Spirit of Christ in us has helped us to seek growth, not escape, God's will and not our own. In the fiery crucible that is my marriage and yours, I pray that you will have the patience to endure while your sinful nature is melted away and the image of God is more clearly revealed. Joy unspeakable awaits. I pray that you'll have the faith to believe Christ to remake your marriage by remaking you.

- Chuck Cruise

Marriage Q&A

Q: I'm planning to get married. What should I be most concerned about?

A: Do not marry an unbeliever.

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14)

You see, God calls you to be holy (1 Peter 1:16). That means that as a believer you are to be specially pure, set apart from the unbelievers of the world – to have *contact* but not *contracts* (marital, social, or legal) with them. The Bible says that when God's people marry unbelievers it is a great evil and treacherous act against God (Nehemiah 13:27).

From a practical standpoint, if you marry an unbeliever, you are asking for problems of the worst kind – not just arguments over going to church, but fundamental, ideological differences in the direction and purpose for your lives. The image of yoking in the passage quoted above is meant to convey two very dissimilar animals trying to pull a cart together. They pull in different directions, so the vehicle cuts an uncertain and miserable path. This is what your marriage will surely be like. You will pull toward Jesus Christ and his glory, but your spouse will pull toward the kingdom of the prince of this world. Do not be fooled into marrying now and thinking he/she will change later. If you do, you're showing that Jesus Christ means less to you than that person.

Q: Too late – I married an unbeliever, and I'm reaping the consequences. What do I do now?

A: Remain married.

The Bible instructs this, suggesting that your unbelieving spouse and even your children are "made holy" by you (1 Corinthians 7:12-16). Pray for your spouse's salvation and seek strength through prayer, Bible reading, and a local church.

Marriage Q&A

Q: What is the secret to a happy marriage?

A: Two Christians experiencing the love of Christ and learning to share it with each other within a covenantal partnership.

Experiencing the love of Christ involves three things:

1. **Be aware of your sin**, how actively and powerfully prideful your heart is, how humanity's root problem – wanting to be like God (Genesis 3:5) – has become your root problem. The dominance of your desires to be recognized, served, affirmed, and admired must be held in check to prevent disappointment and bitterness that your spouse has not met your prideful "needs."
2. **Believe that you are saved by grace** and not by any merit in yourself, for this is the Biblical model for marriage (Ephesians 5). Instead of a *quid pro quo* ("I'll love you if you love me back"), the marriage covenant is to be based on grace ("I will love you no matter how you treat me"). This is the one true "love language."
3. **Stir up the Holy Spirit within you** through daily devotional time and active participation in a local church. Only through intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ and His body, the church, can you be empowered to love another person selflessly.

Q: I'm in an abusive marriage. Can I divorce?

A: Seek protection but remain married.

This is clearly a difficult and sensitive issue. You must provide for the safety of yourself and your children, but you should not divorce unless your spouse effectively ends your marital covenant through sexual unfaithfulness (Matthew 5:32, 19:9) or abandonment (1 Corinthians 7:15). Winning an abusive spouse to the lordship of Jesus Christ is far better than breaking what God has put together. Pray for this and seek pastoral counseling and the fellowship of other believers that you might have patience and strength.