

Marriage Solutions

Introduction. No problem pulls at man's heart like family problems. Marriages sometimes have problems, and the problem might be temporary or one that has lasted for years. It does not even have to be major to be a destructive problem in a marriage.

We can be encouraged by the fact that marriage problems have solutions. Any passage that talks about what marriage should be implies a solution. If both parties try, problems can be fixed and they can have a great marriage.

If couples fail to work for solutions, the problem will get worse and ruin our marriage and hinder our whole service to God (1 Peter 3:7; cp. James 2:10). We can better understand why there are problems and what the solutions are when we realize that marriage involves man, woman, and God (Malachi 2:14; Romans 7:2-3).

I. Marriage Involves Two People — There Will Be Problems

- A. Different families — potential for parental interference.
 - 1. The parents of each may want to continue to have influence in the marriage and decisions the couple make.
 - a) It is easy for parents to apply pressure, either actively or passively.
 - b) The child is torn between loyalty to the parent and loyalty to his/her mate.
 - c) This has the potential to build a lot of resentment over time.
 - 2. Children cannot allow parents to run or ruin the marriage.
 - a) Apron strings must be cut (Matthew 19:4-6; cp. Genesis 2:24).
 - b) Marriage constitutes a new family with a new head.
 - c) Interfering parents may have to be confronted for the good of the couple.
- B. Different minds — potential for communication problems.
 - 1. Marriages fail from a lack of communication.
 - a) Examples:
 - (1) Do not bond or get to know one another.
 - (2) Live separate lives because of work or other issues.
 - (3) Fuss, nag, and pout rather than communicate.
 - (4) Refuse to talk about sensitive subjects.
 - b) Good confrontation plays a large part in creating good marriages.
 - 2. When we learn to effectively communicate:
 - a) It prevents misunderstandings.
 - b) We can discuss and resolve differences.

- c) We can agree before we act.
 - d) We can grow closer together.
- C. Different religions — potential for religious conflict.
1. Marriage to a non-Christian, erring Christian, or weak Christian can cause problems.
 - a) When differences arise there is no true respect for a common standard, the Bible (Psalm 19:7; James 1:25; 1 Peter 1:24-25)
 - b) The one you are closest to does not share the most important part of your life (Colossians 3:1-2).
 - (1) This causes you concern for his/her soul and how he/she could be reached (1 Peter 3:1-6). Efforts to convert your mate may be met with resistance and resentment.
 - (2) A non-Christian may weaken you spiritually (Deuteronomy 7:3-4; Nehemiah 13:26-27). They may even try to hinder your service.
 - c) How to raise the children becomes an issue.
 - (1) Will we spank (Proverbs 22:15)?
 - (2) Will we forbid immodesty, dancing, indecent movies, etc.?
 - (3) Will we make them go to worship assemblies?
 - (4) Will we teach them truth or denominational doctrine?
 2. How do you avoid this conflict?
 - a) Marry a person who fears God (Nehemiah 7:2). That is more than one who is a member of "church of Christ" and goes to worship all the time!
 - b) You determine that you will be faithful no matter what (1 Peter 3:1-6). Let your example be strong and do not nag, fuss, and continually argue.
- D. Different sexes — potential for sexual dissension.
1. Sexual conflict may come in various forms.
 - a) A mate that is unfaithful (Matthew 19:9).
 - b) A mate that is unwilling (1 Corinthians 7:3-4).
 - c) A mate that is inconsiderate or unloving (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).
 2. How to avoid or resolve that conflict.
 - a) Sexual relations are for those who are rightfully married to each other (1 Corinthians 7:2; Hebrews 13:4).
 - b) When that is not honored, the innocent mate can put his/her mate away for fornication (Matthew 19:9).
 - c) Husbands and wives should be understanding and considerate of the other's feelings and desires (Philippians 2:3-4).
- E. Different roles — potential for quarrels in leadership and submission.
1. The husband and wife have different roles.
 - a) The husband is the head (Ephesians 5:23).
 - b) The wife is to submit (Titus 2:5).

2. Problems occur in the roles.
 - a) A husband who will not lead or is domineering.
 - b) A wife who will not submit.
 3. Both must be willing to follow God's plan.
- F. Different finances — potential for money disagreements.
1. Conflict over money is among the top causes for divorce.
 - a) Both may spend more than they make, or one may be a spender while the other wants to be conservative and save.
 - b) The pressures of debt and the spending habits of the other mate may cause severe friction.
 2. The Bible warns of money problems.
 - a) The love of money is the root of all sorts of evil (1 Timothy 6:10).
 - b) Debt makes you a slave (Proverbs 22:7).
 - c) Pay your debts and live within your means (Romans 13:8).

II. Marriage Involves God — There Are Answers

- A. Make a commitment.
1. To God (Proverbs 2:10-17).
 - a) Our faithfulness to God is why we:
 - (1) Seek to please our mates.
 - (2) Fulfill our roles.
 - (3) Fix our problems.
 - b) Let God define our roles in the home.
 - (1) God decides who will be the head and who will submit
 - (2) God decides who will support the family and who will keep house.
 2. To your mate (Matthew 19:4-5).
 - a) View your marriage as a uniting of two souls into one.
 - b) Give yourself completely to your mate — physically and emotionally.
 - c) Grow yourself and help your mate to grow.
 - d) Promise each other that you will never divorce.
- B. Deny yourself.
1. Self-denial is simply saying "no" to yourself (Mark 8:34; cp. Acts 21:13; Philippians 3:7; 1 Peter 2:11). It is difficult to think of a marriage problem that is not a lack of self denial.
 2. How does it relate to marriage?
 - a) Have an interest in your mate and what he/she wants.
 - b) Yield to the will of God.
 - a) Make yourself do what you know you need to do.
- C. Communicate.
1. The Bible implies a need for communication (1 Peter 3:7).

- a) The closeness of the marital relationship makes confrontation essential. You are the conduit of grace and truth in your spouse's life and vice versa.
 - b) Improving our communication is more than just eliminating anger or vulgarity; it is learning to express ourselves appropriately for the situation.
2. Essentials for good communication.
- a) Show respect — your mate is made in God's image and possesses worth, dignity, and value (Matthew 7:12).
 - b) Understand emotions — be careful about saying something that will trigger an emotional response from your mate (Proverbs 18:2).
 - c) Really listen — it is very easy to tune out others when we think they have little to offer, or maybe we are preoccupied with concerns we deem more important (James 1:19).
 - d) Talk appropriately.
 - (1) Do not avoid subjects — let your thoughts be known.
 - (2) Clarify — differences may be just a misunderstanding.
 - (3) Be calm (Proverbs 25:11, 28; 29:22; Ephesians 4:26), kind (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 4:6), and fair (Luke 3:14; Titus 2:3).

Conclusion. Marriages are made strong with problems, not in spite of them. If you are married, understand that there will be problems along the way, but remember that if they are handled correctly, they will enhance your marriage, not destroy it.